

The Epistle to the Romans

Paul's Treatise on the
Nature and Character
Of the Gospel



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Preface

When I was a student in college one of my teachers made the statement that the book of Romans was one of the most profound books in existence. At the time I didn't quite understand the impact of his words but as he began lecturing on the book I began to embrace the depth of his statement. This gave birth to my love affair with this wonderful and penetrating book. Romans gave me a view of the mind of God which I had never experienced before. It also taught me that Biblical study continues to be exciting and fruitful regardless of how many times I have read a Biblical passage or how much I think I understand about it. Romans is the epitome of all of this. I never cease to be amazed at its profound truth and the wonder of Christ's atonement.

Sixty-three years have passed since I attended that college class but the memory of my teacher, J. P. Sanders, lingers vividly in my heart. I am indebted to him beyond expression. As you study Paul's Epistle to the Romans remember to accept the challenge of its message. Don't ever be content to just read the Bible, especially Romans. Instead allow its message, its words, its theme, and its vitality to challenge your past beliefs, your understanding, and your life. Try to experience the excitement of change and enhancement as you study this book. Paul will help you encounter the mind of God as you have never experienced it before and you will leave its pages with a profound feeling of wonder, amazement, and reverence. You will know that you have been standing on holy ground.

Chapter I

Introduction and Analysis

The book of Romans is Paul's longest writing and certainly his most comprehensive. The more a person understands the character of this book the greater will be his understanding of the character of the gospel. This book can challenge you each time you read it. However, a casual reading of the book will never produce these challenges. One must carefully study every important word and concept in Romans to begin probing the profound nature of this wonderful writing. The book is not a complete systematic summary of every aspect of Christianity as some have claimed, but an exposition of the nature of the gospel itself. See the discussion below.

Paul introduces himself with his normal epistolary greeting but the document does not read like a personal letter. Parts of the first and fifteenth chapters along with almost the entire sixteenth chapter show an epistolary character but the bulk of the document reads more like a theological treatise than a letter. In Romans Paul presents his most profound and probing description of the nature of the gospel. In this regard, no other portion of Scripture is comparable. The general importance of the letter through Christian history cannot be overestimated. Great religious movements such as the Protestant Reformation found their roots in the book of Romans. It has been a constant challenge to the best minds in Christian history, and every serious student of the New Testament finds it new and refreshing with each reading.

In this introduction we will look at the authorship, date and origin, the purpose and the occasion of writing. This will be followed by a look at the church in Rome, and a survey of the development of the polemic of the book in chapters 1-11.

Date of Writing

Evidence for the date of writing is gathered from historical notations in Romans, Acts, and the Corinthian correspondence. In Rom. 15:25-27 Paul mentions that he was going to Jerusalem carrying a contribution for the poor. He has stressed this in other writings such as I Cor. 16:1-4 and II Cor. 8-9. This leads us to believe that I and II Corinthian were also written close to the same time as Romans. However, since Paul is on the verge of leaving for Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25), we are led to believe that Romans was probably written a little later than II Corinthians. He wrote II Corinthians from Macedonia and in Rom. 16:1 he mentions Phoebe as a servant of the church in Cenchreae, a seaport city close to Corinth. In Rom. 16:23 he speaks of the hospitality of Gaius whom Paul says he had baptized (I Cor. 1:14). In addition, he mentions Erastus who may have lived in Corinth although this cannot be proved. See Rom. 16:23 and II Tim. 4:20. This evidence dates Romans between A.D. 56-58 and the place of writing was probably Corinth.

The Church in Rome

Little is known about the establishment of the church in Rome, but in the mid-second century the church seems to have been one of the largest in the Empire. As early as the time of Clement of Rome (A.D. 90-110), the influence of the church in Rome was felt in other parts of the world, as

evidenced by Clement's letter to the Corinthians. In that letter he writes:

Take up the epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul. What did he write to you at the time when the Gospel first began to be preached? Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, and Cephas, and Apollos, because even then parties had been formed among you.

I Clement 47

Some visitors from Rome were present in Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:11), and probably took the gospel back to their city. In A.D. 49 Claudius, the emperor issued an edict which forced the Jews out of Rome. (See Acts 18:2.) Aquila and Priscilla were among those evicted, and they went to Corinth where they came in contact with Paul. There is nothing to indicate that Paul converted them after their arrival in Corinth, so we should probably conclude that they were Christians while in Rome. Later they are seen teaching and correcting Apollos concerning John's baptism.

At the conclusion of his third mission tour Paul returned to Jerusalem where he was arrested, and after about two years he was sent to Rome for trial. This was about A.D. 59, ten years after the edict of Claudius. Apparently many Jews returned to Rome during that ten years period. Leaders of the Jewish community in Rome came to visit Paul while he was under house arrest in the city. See Acts 28:14-22. Tradition has it that Paul was released after 2 years, and made a trip to Spain. This appears to be the thrust of a statement from Clement of Rome when he mentions that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment and he made a voyage to "the limit of the west." If this is correct, it probably means that the Pastoral epistles were written during the period between his two Roman imprisonments. In the book of Romans Paul says that he wanted to go to Spain and intended to visit Rome on the way. See Rom. 15:23-28. The account of Paul's activities recorded in Acts does not make room for such a visit prior to his imprisonment in Acts 21-28.

The question naturally arises concerning Peter and the church in Rome. Catholic teaching says Peter established the church in Rome, and was its bishop for about twenty-five years. Writers such as Papias, Clement of Rome, and Hegesippus (all second century), along with Clement of Alexandria, Origin and others (all third century) mention Peter's presence in Rome, some claiming he had a lengthy stay in the city. However a stay of twenty-five years for Peter in Rome does not fit into the chronology of Acts or Paul's statements in I Corinthians and Galatians.

Acts 15 shows that Peter was still in Jerusalem and present at the Jerusalem Conference about A.D. 50 (see also Gal. 1:18), and that he was in Antioch when Paul was there (Gal. 2:11). The exact time of this event is not definitely known. If Peter had established the church in Rome, or was its "bishop" when Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans, one has to ask why Paul would have written the epistle at all. He had never visited the city, and had no prior relationship with the Roman church beyond his acquaintance with some Christians there. Was Peter not equipped to take care of the problems in the church in Rome? Also, if Peter had been the founder and bishop of the Roman church, it is odd that Paul would not have sent greetings to him since there are more personal salutations in Rom. 16 than in any other writing of Paul. Yet there is no greeting

sent to Peter.

Paul's statement in I Cor. 1:12-13 indicates that Peter (Cephas) had been in Corinth prior to the time Paul wrote that letter but after Paul's initial visit to that city. This would place him in Corinth somewhere between A.D. 52 (the probable date when Paul left Corinth) and A.D. 55 (the probable date of writing I Corinthians).

It is generally agreed by both Catholic and non-Catholic scholars however that Peter did visit Rome some time later, and that he suffered martyrdom there in about A.D.67. It may be that the book of I Peter was written from Rome, and that Peter's reference to Babylon in I Pet. 5:13 stands symbolically for Rome rather than referring to the actual Mesopotamian city of Babylon. Although there are scholars on both sides of this issue, the preponderance of scholarly opinion is that the name "Babylon" had become a symbolic reference to Rome even before the writing of the book of Revelation. Tradition for Peter's presence and martyrdom in Rome is strong. His mere presence in Rome, shortly before his martyrdom however, does not support the tradition that he established the church in that city or that he was the bishop of Rome for a long period. In I Pet. 5:1 he refers to himself simply as "a fellow elder," not as "bishop of Rome."

Evidence for Authorship

This is not a serious question since the evidence for the Pauline authorship is the best in the entire New Testament. Even the most severe critics of the New Testament do not challenge the authenticity of this book. However, we offer the following external and internal evidence for your consideration.

External Evidence

External evidence refers to various ancient writers who cited or alluded to a document under investigation, in this case the book of Romans. This evidence is also referred to as Patristic evidence or the writings of the Fathers. A strong and varied group of early church writers shows that the Roman letter was cited by Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Hippolytus and others, all of whom lived and wrote in the early to mid-second century. It is found in every catalogue and version from the second century forward. In fact, scholars of every persuasion agree that the external evidence for the Pauline authorship of Romans could not be stronger. F.W. Beare expresses the strength of evidence for the Pauline authorship in this way: "The rejection of Romans involves the rejection of all of the Pauline letters, for there is no other letter with any greater claim to authenticity which could serve as a standard of comparison." (F.W. Beare, "Letter to the Romans," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, George A. Buttrick, general editor, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 112.)

Internal Evidence

Internal evidence consists of things within the document which attest to the Pauline authorship of Roman. First, the author calls himself Paul, and describes himself as an apostle of Christ. The general outlook of the epistle is distinctively Pauline. The topics discussed are those discussed by Paul in many of his other letters. His important words and concepts are found throughout the

letter. The style of the writing is similar to Paul's other letters. The internal evidence points unmistakably to Paul.

The Argument of the Epistle

After his introduction (Rom. 1:1-15) Paul states the theme of the book in Rom. 1:16 *i.e.* the gospel is God's power to save. This is clearly the undergirding of the epistle. To the Jews in the Roman church this could have been controversial since they continued to hold a strong adherence to the Law of Moses, and they did not understand that the Gentiles could also be heirs of God's promise to Abraham.

After stating the thesis of the letter Paul proceeds to show how all of mankind has fallen under the power of sin, which he later refers to as bondage to sin. He includes both the Gentiles and the Jews in this condemnation. The evil behavior of which the Jews had accused the Gentiles had also characterized Jewish behavior. Paul therefore concludes that Jews and Gentiles alike are under the power of sin, and are not righteous in the sight of God. Since no one measures up to the absolute standard God has laid out, all are unrighteous and are therefore in need of God's forgiveness whether Jew or Gentile. The Jew-Gentile controversy provides Paul with the perfect vehicle to use in his presentation of the uniqueness of the gospel.

Throughout the epistle Paul uses the diatribe in his argumentation. This method either states or implies a question which the writer anticipates or has reason to believe would be in the mind of the addressees. He then proceeds to answer the question by showing its lack of sound reasoning, by demonstrating the consequences of such reasoning, by an appeal to authority, etc. It is generally considered to be a very strong mode of argumentation and under some circumstances implies some anger on the part of the presenter or writer. It is somewhat like having an imaginary antagonist who is being addressed by a speaker or writer.

Paul does not treat sin lightly, nor does he ignore the importance of God's justice. God must act consistently with his own just nature and sin must have its just punishment. But this would mean the destruction of all of God's beloved children because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Rom. 3:23. Also see Rom. 6:23. The atonement accomplished by Christ on the cross is the only answer to the problem. Both mercy and justice can flow from God, but only through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Forgiveness from God comes, not by man's achievements in keeping law and ceremony, but by man's dependence on, and faith (trust) in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Through that atoning sacrifice and man's trust in that atonement God imparts his own righteousness to the sinner.

This concept of faith is not new. It is exemplified in Abraham, for "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." See Gen. 15:6 and Rom. 4:22-23. This justification was not accomplished through the Law or circumcision, but through faith. Paul calls attention to the fact that Abraham was declared righteous prior to both circumcision and the Law of Moses.

The practical aspects of justification by faith are significant when one considers that trust in Christ's atonement rather than in one's own righteous works (obedience) brings peace and joy in the place of frustration and uncertainty (Rom. 5:1-2). Grace gives complete security of salvation

to the believer, because it is God's gift to mankind when one rightly responds to his grace. The destructive power of sin came through Adam, but it was conquered by Christ on the cross. This is the true picture of God's grace.

Since salvation comes through grace – God's gift – does this mean that the more we sin the more evident is God's grace? See Rom. 6:1-4. Paul says that this kind of reasoning is completely inconsistent with the new nature of the redeemed man. The new man is no longer a slave of sin, but he is a slave of Christ. As such, he should live a life which reflects this new relationship. Mankind will still have struggles with sin but we must recognize that Christ delivers us from sin's tight grip.

Therefore the one who is in Christ is not condemned because he has been set free from the law of sin and death. This is not referring only to the Law of Moses, but to the simple principle that "the wages of sin is death," Rom. 6:23. This principle was true even before the giving of the Law of Moses. Sin is no longer enthroned in one's life, but the Spirit is now his strength. Thus there is eternal hope living in him as he awaits the liberation of God's creation from the deadly effects of sin. God is for us, and nothing can separate us from his love.

Paul anticipates that this teaching concerning grace and salvation will raise a question in the minds of his Jewish readers. He deals with some of these objections by picturing the Jews as if they were asking, "If this plan of God is so unspeakably wonderful, why would the Jews have rejected Jesus?" Paul's answer is in chapters 9-11, and it embodies two important concepts.

First, God is sovereign, and has, through the ages, made sovereign choices in order to bring about his purpose in Christ. Paul illustrates God's purpose in a variety of ways. The Jews misunderstood this purpose, and misinterpreted their own role as God's chosen people. Through Abraham, all of the families of the world were to be blessed, not just the Jewish nation.

Second, God has not cast off the people of Israel. However, the fact that they rejected the gospel gave the Gentile world an opportunity to hear the gospel. Paul finally reminds his recipients that both Jew and Gentile will be saved in exactly the same way. The polemic section concludes with Paul's doxology in 11:33-36. Here he extols the wonder of God's wisdom, and the profound character of the gospel.

With the argument of chapters 1 through 11 forming his foundation, Paul gives instructions concerning the Christian life found in chapters 12-15. Chapter 16 has many salutations and greetings, and his final doxology.

Outline of Romans

Introduction: Rom. 1:1-7

I. The theme of Romans. 1:8-17

- A. The occasion of writing, and personal greeting. 1:8-15
- B. The righteousness of God is uniquely revealed in the gospel. 1:16-17

II. Sin, Man's fundamental problem. 1:18—3:18

- A. God's wrath is revealed against all people because of their sins. 1:18-32
- B. God's judgment against all those who sin. 2:1-16
- C. The Jews' reliance on the law and circumcision is not a solution for sin. 2:17-29
- D. The unfaithfulness of the Jews did not destroy the faithfulness of God in carrying out His promises and purposes. 3:1-8
- E. Conclusion: Sin is the fundamental problem of all mankind, including both Jews and Greeks. There is no distinction. 3:9-18

III. Justification: God's intervention. 3:19 – 4:25

- A. Righteousness, atonement, faith, and works. The reality of sin and guilt makes the atonement necessary. 3:19-31
- B. Two examples.
 - 1. Abraham's faith and God's declaration of his justification. 4:1-5.
 - 2. David's expression of forgiveness; "Blessed is the man whose sin God will never count against him." 4:6-8
 - 3. Paul's application of these examples. 4:9-25

IV. Freedom vs. Bondage: Grace, and life in the Spirit. 5:1—8:39

- A. Peace, joy, and reconciliation are the products of justification by faith, whereas frustration, insecurity, and alienation are the products of man's attempt to bring justification by his own goodness. 5:1-11
- B. Sin and redemption: Adam and Christ. 5:12-21
- C. Sin and grace. Justification by grace is incompatible with the continuation of a life of sin. We must walk in "newness of life." 6:1-14
- D. Sin as bondage. To obey sin is to be a slave of sin. 6:15-23
- E. The law and bondage. 7:1-6
 - 1. Marriage and a spouse's death: an illustration of fidelity and release. 7:1-3
 - 2. Law bears fruit unto death (the "wages of sin"). Those who are dead to the law and are justified by faith can now bear fruit unto God. 7:4-6

F. Paul's personal illustration. 7:7-25

1. The Law (any law) arouses disobedience in me, condemns me, and destroys me, because law can never forgive me. Instead law entices me to disobey.
2. I am a wretched man in such a state, but through Christ I receive the victory over sin.

G. Freedom through Christ, and the law of the Spirit. 8:1-17

H. God's blessings to those who are justified by faith. 8:18-39

V. Israel and God's Sovereignty. 9:1—11:36

A. God's sovereignty in making choices. 9:1-29

1. Israel has not been forgotten.
2. God's choice of Israel was not for their exclusive salvation and the condemnation of the rest of mankind. Instead, God's purpose was that through the nation of Israel the Savior would be brought into the world.

B. Israel pursued righteousness through the Law, but missed the righteousness of God that comes through faith. 9:30—10:21

C. Does this constitute God's rejection of Israel? No. Israel has misunderstood its role in God's plan to bring all mankind to himself. 11:1-32

D. Paul's Doxology. 11:33-36

VI. A life of justification through grace demands a life of godliness. 12:1—15:13

A. Becoming a living sacrifice. 12:1-8

B. Love applied. 12:9-21

C. The Christian citizen and civil government. 13:1-7

D. Love, law, and the weaker brother. 13:8 – 15:13.

VII. Closing remarks. 15:14—16:27

A. Closing salutations and exhortations. 15:14-22

B. Paul's future plans. 15:23-33

C. Personal greetings. 16:1-16

Final doxology. 16:17-27

Chapter II

Words, Concepts, and Theology

I. Introduction

Paul's Epistle to the Romans is one of the most important books in the New Testament. Concerning its purpose, two questions arise. (1) Why did Paul write to the church at Rome at all, and (2) Why did he write just what he did? At the time he wrote Romans, he had not visited the city itself although he had many friends there (Rom. 16). In the letter he states his intention to visit them at later date. Rom. 1:8ff, 15:19ff.

A Summary of Christian Theology

Theologically this is the weightiest of all of Paul's letters. E.F. Scott calls the letter a "theological treatise," exposing the whole undergirding of the gospel. (E.F. Scott, *The Literature of the New Testament*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 157.) The grand purpose of the book has been variously stated (and misstated). Some have thought that the book is primarily concerned with the difference between the Law of Moses and the Gospel. Others have considered it to be written primarily to resolve a conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in the church in Rome. Some consider it an explanation to the Jews that they are saved in the same way as the Gentiles are saved. Each of these statements of purpose overlaps the others in some ways yet each has its own individuality. It appears however that all of these are, at best, only side issues in the book. They are used as vehicles to accomplish the real purpose of the apostle. He wants to lay out for his readers the inner-working of the mind of God as he devised the core elements of the gospel. Paul does this in a systematic fashion showing the absolute uniqueness of the gospel and its central theme which is the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Nothing in the history of mankind has ever taken place which effectively dealt with and solved the problem of sin and divine forgiveness. This book gives us a glimpse into the thinking and reasoning of God in creating the gospel.

A great part of Romans consists of a summation of the major themes of the gospel in the historical setting of Israel and the Law. It has become the source book for what has been termed "Pauline theology." In Romans, Paul gives a summary of Christian theology dealing with the justice and mercy of God, the nature of man, the meaning of the gospel, the severity of sin, the meaning of faith, the atonement of Christ, the futility of meritorious works, God's grace, imputed righteousness, flesh, and Spirit. The more complete our understanding of these components, the better will be our understanding of the nature of our relationship to God.

In the various sections below we will briefly survey the meaning of important words and concepts found in Romans.

The Gospel

The word "gospel" is the English translation of the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον*, (*euaggelion*). This was a common Greek word, and its basic meaning was simply "good news, particularly the

“good news of victory.” When an army returned from a victorious battle the people would greet the soldiers with a shout of **εὐαγγέλιον!** Along with this there was also a religious connotation in some uses of the word because a sacrifice was frequently offered at the time the announcement of the good news (**εὐαγγέλιον**) of victory. At times the word was used when a new emperor acceded to the throne, ushering in a new era and hopefully bringing peace and prosperity. But for many, particularly the Jews, such an event was not the “good news” of peace and prosperity, but the bad news of tyranny, force, and persecution. The verb form is found only six times in the Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint, LXX) where it is translated “to proclaim or to bring good news.” The substantive form is found even less frequently.

The “gospel [good news] of the kingdom of God” is in strong contrast to the “gospel” of the new emperor. While some might have been ashamed of (or embarrassed by) the so-called “good news” about the new emperor – who may bring tyranny and hardship – Paul says he is not ashamed of the “good news” of Christ. One is a “gospel” of the grandeur, pomp, and power of the new emperor. The other is the “gospel” of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. It is interesting that there is no “definition” of the gospel in the New Testament except in I Cor. 15:1-7. Even this reference however is not so much a “definition” as it is a description of the basis of the gospel. The meaning and significance of the “good news” are wrapped up in its teaching of Christ’s sacrifice, forgiveness, and salvation.

The New Testament gospel is not the announcement of secular good news – great success, happiness, optimism, a positive life, etc. – but the announcement of the good news of salvation brought by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As such it carries a depth of meaning which goes far beyond a simple propositional statement of belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Paul’s statement in I Cor. 15:1-7 shows that the basic message of Christ is his death, burial, resurrection, and appearances. This message became the **κηρυγμα**, (*kēgruma*) or “central proclamation” of the early church. See Rom. 16:25, I Cor. 2:4, and I Cor. 15:14, where the Greek word **κηρυγμα**, (*kēgruma*) is translated “proclamation” or “preaching.”

The teaching of salvation, as offered in the gospel, was new to the world into which Christianity came and quite contrary to the thinking and culture of the secular population, the philosophers, and the pagan religionists. The idea of an afterlife was present in many pagan religions, but the gospel embodied a unique teaching concerning sin and guilt and the necessity of grace and forgiveness. Even in Judaism this was not clearly defined and it came to be misunderstood by the Jews. The focus of the gospel of Christ was his redemptive act of grace based solely on the initiative of God. With the gospel a new age in the history of the God-man relationship was ushered in.

The word **εὐαγγέλιον** (*euaggelion*) and its cognates, generally translated “gospel,” is a favorite in the New Testament, occurring more than one hundred twenty times. Paul uses it more than seventy times in his writings. He begins the Roman letter by defining himself as one who was set aside for the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus used the expression the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23, 9:35, and 24:14) but Paul preferred the gospel of God, gospel of Christ, gospel of the grace of God, etc. He presents the gospel as God’s message of salvation. In it is God’s power to bring people to himself through the forgiveness provided in Christ’s atonement and the transformation of lives to conform to the holiness of God. It demands obedience, self-denial,

sacrifice, and devotion, none of which are seen as man's achievements but as man's expression of his unspeakable gratitude for the atonement brought about by Christ. One's response to the gospel throughout his entire life will be the foundation on which God's final judgment will be based. See Rom. 2:16.

It is important that we understand that Paul does not see the gospel as a break from the Old Testament covenant but as the fulfillment of that covenant. Thus Paul sees a continuum from the Old to the New, reaching back to God's promise to Abraham and moving forward to its fulfillment in Christ. Therefore it is the fulfillment of all of the hopes of Israel. See Acts 26:6, 28:20.

For Paul the gospel is not just the story of Jesus but it is the power of His life, death, and resurrection. It is not just the ethical-moral code of the Sermon on the Mount. Because of sin, man has been alienated from his Creator but the power to bring about the reconciliation of man to God is the essence of the "good news" of Jesus Christ. His divinity is declared by his resurrection (Rom. 1:3-4), which is at the heart of the gospel.

The Righteousness of God

Romans 1:16-17 gives the thesis of the Roman letter namely that God's righteousness is revealed through the gospel. In the gospel we have God's power to save. The word "righteousness" generally carries a qualitative meaning *i.e.* "the characteristic of being good, right, or just." Since there is something about God's righteousness which is uniquely revealed in the gospel, the simple moral/ethical character of God could not be the whole meaning of the term "righteousness" in this reference. Certainly God's righteous character is described abundantly in the Old Testament. However, Paul shows that there is something about God's righteousness which is veiled in the Old Testament but is brought to light in the gospel. Immortality is indirectly affirmed in the Old Testament, but Paul says that the gospel "brought immortality to light" (II Tim. 1:10). In much the same way, the gospel brings a better understanding of the righteousness of God. Paul's use of the word "righteousness" should be understood to mean an *act* of God rather than a characteristic of God. This act is on behalf of men, in which God provides a means for changing an unrighteous person into a righteous person. This change is accomplished through God's own initiative and made possible by the atonement of Christ.

This concept of "the righteousness of God" is completely unique to the gospel and it is of great importance to us as we endeavor to understand the true character of the gospel message. Isaiah makes reference to this in Is. 46:13 where God says, "I have brought near my righteousness and I do not hold back my salvation." A similar statement is made in Is. 51:5: "My righteousness quickly draws near and my salvation comes forth like a light." Notice that God's righteousness is something which is "brought near" or "quickly draws near" indicating an *act* of God rather than simply the description of the character of God. Notice also that Isaiah does not explain or develop this idea. This development is left to the revelation of the gospel in the New Testament, particularly in the book of Romans. When we see Isaiah's statements in light of Rom. 1:16-17, we see that God's righteousness constitutes an *act* of God for man's benefit. However, this dimension of God's righteousness is not described until we come to the gospel of Christ where it is finally revealed and developed. This is uppermost in the mind of Paul and it fits well into his statement in Rom. 1:16-17 where we see God's righteousness revealed, *i.e.*, "going forth" to

mankind as used in Is. 46:13 and 51:5.

The term **δικαιοσύνη**, (*dikaïosunē*) translated “righteousness” or “justification” is a legal term meaning to be legally just or right in the eyes of law – any law, whether religious, civil, or criminal, etc. This is the concept of a person being declared righteous because he is *in fact* righteous. This presents a theological problem because no man ever qualifies *in fact* for such righteousness (“all have sinned,” Rom. 3:23). Only God is righteous *in fact*. Paul states that the gospel reveals how God “brings near” his own righteousness which changes (converts) unrighteous men into righteous men. Through the operation of law (any law) such a conversion is impossible. Once a person has sinned (violated the law), he can never be “righteous” in a legal sense. However, God does not play a game with us treating us as if we were righteous when we are in fact unrighteous. Instead, he gives to us a part of himself and we become righteous, not by our own acts, but by an act of God in Christ’s atonement. As recorded by Isaiah, “I have brought near my righteousness and I do not hold back my salvation.” Though our character is changed in this process, this is not the basis of our justification (righteousness). Instead, God, through Christ, has reconciled us to himself, thus changing our status and our old nature – our relationship to God. In II Cor. 5:18-19 Paul said, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (NIV) However, this change from an unrighteous person into a righteous person gives no reason for an individual to boast, because the change is accomplished entirely by God, and a person accepts it through faith (trust in the atonement). That is to say, we do not *trust* in our own goodness or adherence to any law to establish the proper relationship with God. Instead, we *trust* in the atonement of Christ to accomplish this. (See the sections on Faith and Obedience below).

The Concept of Sin

Although Paul considers man to be in the image of God, he also shows that man has fallen under the control of sin. However he does not regard sin as inherited but as real sin committed by the individual. A person in sin is a person under the power of sin and that person is therefore a slave of sin. Such a one could not possibly be free in Christ.

Frequently we view sin as a group of single acts of disobedience. In Romans as well as in his other writings, Paul generally speaks of sin as a state of personal being rather than just a group of single acts of disobedience. This is not to say that Paul loses sight of specific acts of sin. This is abundantly demonstrated in I Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:19-21, and Col. 3:5-11 as well as other Pauline passages. Instead, he views the unregenerate man – the non-Christian – as living in this state of sin and he contrasts this with the Christian – the regenerated man – living in a state of God’s grace. Therefore it is impossible for a person to be a child of God but at the same time be living in bondage to sin. This creates part of the dichotomy in the epistle. We cannot live lives of justification before God and at the same time be living under the bondage of sin. Neither can we depend on our good lives as the instrumentality of our justification before God. Such an idea would create an incongruent concept of man’s sinful existence and his inability to forgive his own sins through his meritorious works.

There is great psychological as well as spiritual value in Paul’s statements concerning sin, grace,

and forgiveness. A person cannot forgive himself of his sins against his fellow man, or against God through the simple reformation of his life. This reformation of life, though absolutely essential (“newness of life”) is not the means of one’s justification before God. “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” Rom. 3:20. Forgiveness through God’s justification in Christ brings about “peace with God” (Rom 5:1), and consequently the capacity for peace with one’s fellow men.

Forgiveness and the Need of Atonement

Is there really a need for divine forgiveness? We are willing to accept the need of man’s forgiveness of his fellows when a breach has come in a relationship but the need for divine forgiveness may easily escape us. In some cases, modern psychology and philosophy have led us to believe that ideas such as sin, guilt, and punishment are psychopathic and tend to destroy one’s mental well being and sense of self-esteem. It is evident that there is a misunderstanding here. The New Testament is not as interested in the punishment for the sin as it is in the fact of the sin. Sin must be seen as a serious offense against God. The *fact* of that offense is more important in the New Testament than the mere consequences (both temporal and eternal) of the deed. When one is involved in a deep offense against a loved one, the remorse, the sorrow, and the suffering which the offender encounters are not because of his punishment, but because he knows his offense has severely injured the life of one whom he loves very deeply. Children who are taught the principle of forgiveness early in life are likely to grow up with healthy attitudes because forgiveness emphasizes relationships as well as deeds.

Some say we should simply forget the past since we can’t change it and move on to better things in the future. This attitude is very naïve and it overlooks the need for reconciliation where a great wrong has been committed against another. An offender who passes over a grave offense as if no amends are needed seriously injures a valued relationship. He should not brood over his past sins but he must find forgiveness and reconciliation before he can gain the power to move ahead with his life. The whole idea of confession and repentance – a change of attitude and thinking – plays an important role in human-to-human relationships and also in the human-divine relationship. Unconfessed sins against God are likely to lead to moral deterioration, and a breakdown in one’s psychological and spiritual well being. This presents a different situation for the atheist or agnostic. Paul is not dealing with that situation. (Donald Baillie, *God Was In Christ*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1948, pp. 157-167.)

Many human beings are greatly troubled by what they perceive as their unworthy past. However, without divine forgiveness they have nowhere to turn for relief. The realization of these past misdeeds can result in hopelessness which may dominate one’s life. Paul describes such a one as a “slave of sin.” Jesus reminded the Jews of his day that slavery to sin was also their problem. See John 8: 31-36. There is a sense of responsibility and accountability which comes into play here.

Improvement in one’s ethical and moral behavior does not constitute forgiveness. My present or future “goodness” doesn’t forgive my past “badness.” To entertain such an attitude becomes nothing more than self-righteousness. (See the sections on “The Righteousness of God,” and “Salvation and the Law.”) God’s justice as well as his mercy and love must dominate my

thoughts, and these must be held in balance with each other. See Rom. 11:22. I may feel better by doing good deeds in the future, but such deeds do not change the past or bring forgiveness. I must understand and accept the fact that all of my offenses (sins) are offenses (sins) against God. They are not simply personal flaws, psychological maladjustment, bad judgment, or offenses against my fellows. Once a person accepts the reality of the severity of sin the need for divine forgiveness becomes evident.

When considering the necessity of divine forgiveness two questions arise. “Why did Jesus have to die?” and “Why is atonement necessary?” These are perfectly legitimate questions when one begins thinking of Christ and the crucifixion along with the idea of atonement and forgiveness. Contemporary society is generally more interested in success, happiness, and security than in the “old fashion” concepts of sin, atonement, forgiveness and salvation. The question asked is not “Is the gospel statement of faith true?” but “Is the gospel important and relevant to contemporary man?” This attitude did not originate in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The problem is underscored by the fact that the gospel came to the world almost two thousand years ago. “How could such an old system of thought be useful in our advanced technological culture?”

When we consider the gospel message as outmoded or irrelevant to our own generation it reveals two important areas of misunderstanding. First there is the denial that sin as the basic problem of humanity and second there is the misunderstanding of the message of the gospel. If the gospel is considered primarily a moral-ethical handbook for a success, self-esteem, optimism, security, positive interpersonal relationships, and a happy life this objection would have some validity. However, it is imperative that we recognize and deal with the true plight of mankind in all generations by coming to grips with the importance of the Biblical doctrine of sin and the consequent need for atonement, divine forgiveness, and reconciliation. Unfortunately little is said today about the incarnation, even though the atonement and reconciliation are completely dependent on it. Jesus was not just a man who lived and died a martyr’s death. He was “God with us” as Matthew affirms in his reference to Isaiah (Matt. 1:23) and the “Word [which] became flesh” as John notes in John 1:1-14. It is this unique aspect of Jesus which makes the atonement possible. Although Paul does not present any kind of organized theology of the incarnation, he obviously builds on its truth. See Rom. 1:1-4 and 8:1-4. Paul explains the need for the incarnation in II Cor. 5:18-19 by saying, “But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” (ASV) Thus, God took the initiative by sending his Son into the world. The ideas of atonement and reconciliation are worthless without the incarnation. (D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), 1948, pp. 160-171.)

Could not God have saved mankind in some other way? Why did Jesus have to suffer? Why didn’t God just pronounce forgiveness? No complete and satisfactory answer to these questions can be given but partial answers serve a very useful purpose for us. It is important to remember that Jesus faced this question in the Garden of Gethsemane. He basically asked the Father “Is there some other way for mankind to be saved?” He expressed in this way: “*If it is possible*, let this cup be taken from me. Yet, not as I will but as you will” (NIV), Matt. 26:39. No, it could not be done in any other way and still satisfy the demands of divine justice and divine mercy, both of which are part of the nature of God. When we go beyond this and come face to face with the question of “Why?” it is impossible for human reasoning to produce a satisfactory answer.

This is part of Paul's argument in I Cor. 1:18-25. He compared the philosophical "foolishness" of the gospel to the philosophical "wisdom" of men. This is, in fact, part of the demand of trust. Our trust in Christ's atonement will always be one of the foundation stones of reconciliation. In its simplest form, this is the meaning of "salvation by faith" *i.e.*, one must trust in the atonement although its reason is beyond our power to comprehend.

We can, however, partially see one important reason Jesus had to die. The seriousness of sin and the unchangeable justice, grace, and mercy of God are of first importance. Paul gave us some insight when he wrote, "In order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful." Rom. 7:13. Here Paul attempts to show us just how serious sin is in the mind of God. Through this, we gain a better picture of the necessity of atonement.

Some say that the ideas of sacrifice and atonement are foreign to the nature of God. Liberal theologians say that God's love and mercy cover our sins in the same way that the prodigal son's sins were freely forgiven by his father without the thought or need for atonement. Statements of this kind assign no cost for sin. The Parable of the Prodigal Son deals with God's *willingness to forgive* and the destructive character of self-righteousness (the elder brother) not with the cost of forgiveness and the seriousness of sin. The Bible teaches that sin is not just serious, but is has the power to damn mankind. Sin therefore cannot go unpunished. The Old Testament system, especially the sacrifices, vividly illustrates this cost. Forgiveness is not cheap. The power of God's love is more clearly seen when one considers the price paid for sins – not paid by the sinner, but by the sinless Christ.

One must not forget that God's character is one of justice as well as love. The book of Romans, especially Rom. 3:19-31, shows that "God faced a problem." We can express this in its simplest form by stating two principles. First, man is incapable of paying the price of his own sin. Second, ungodliness cannot stand throughout eternity in the presence of God. So man stood condemned but because of God's love for mankind he was not willing to discard his children for all eternity. How then were justice and mercy to be brought together? Paul shows that this reconciliation could be accomplished only by atonement. To the Corinthians he said, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." See II Cor. 5:21. In Romans Paul expressed it by saying, "He [God] did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith [trust] in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. This concept is beyond our power to figure out by human wisdom. See I Cor. 1:20-21. Consequently Paul says that justification comes to "those who have faith in Jesus." That is, those who place their complete trust in the power of the atonement. Here Paul shows the contrast between trusting in the atonement of Christ, and trusting in one's own meritorious works for justification. God does not offer amnesty – a free ride. Instead, God himself paid the price of our sins. The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:4-5 illustrates this very well.

In our English versions, the Greek word *ἱλαστήριον* (*hilastērion*) is usually translated "atonement, sacrifice of atonement, or propitiation." The verb form is found in Luke 18:13 where it is translated "mercy." One of the problems is that we do not use the word "propitiation" in common speech, and its meaning is obscure to us. (See the discussion below.) Through the atonement offered by Christ (propitiation), sinful man is delivered from the punishment which he

actually deserves. The initiative comes from God, not from man's feeling of need or from man's request. It was God, not man, who offered the sacrifice of atonement. The Bible never considers man's obedience to God as man's participation in his own atonement. This would be salvation by works.

In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the LXX, the same word, ἱλαστήριον (*hilastērion*) is used to identify the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. In the KJV it is usually referred to as the "mercy seat." Here the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrificed animal seven times as the symbolic act of atonement. See Lev. 16. Anything which became unclean or tainted by sin was in need of expiation (cleansing) since the unclean could not stand before the holy God. The writer of Hebrews also says, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The Old Testament frequently refers to the shedding of blood and cleansing from sin. Propitiation is sometimes explained as an offering to appease the wrath of an angry God. God was not in need of appeasement in either the Old Testament or the New. Instead, sin needed to be purged so that there would be no barriers between the covenantal partners. God's wrath is provoked by sin, but, his wrath is against the sin, which he hates, not against the sinner whom he loves. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5:8.

Until Christ, there was an unbridgeable gap between God and man. This is always evident when one contemplates the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Although the animal died as a sort of substitute for the sinner, the value of the animal could never be compared to the value of a human being. Consequently, the worshipper could never perceive such a sacrifice as completely adequate for the purging of his own sins. Those sacrifices vividly demonstrated the exceeding sinfulness of sin. See Rom. 7:13.

In Rom. 3:25, ἱλαστήριον (*hilastērion*), is used to speak of Christ's death as a sacrifice of atonement. The stress is on the shedding of Christ's blood as the means of removing sin, which is the barrier between the partners in the covenant of God. John the Baptist did not use the word for atonement but, according to John 1:29 he spoke of Jesus as "The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." This has an unmistakable symbolic connection to the Passover. Later Paul spoke of Jesus as "our Passover lamb," I Cor. 5:8. In Rom. 3:19-31 there seems to be a blending of the Passover idea (deliverance) and the Day of Atonement (expiation). In Matt. 26:28 Jesus refers to the shedding of his blood as "the blood of the covenant." William Sanday says, "What it all amounts to is that the religion of the New Testament, like the religion of the Old, has the idea of sacrifice as one of its central conceptions, not however scattered over an elaborate ceremonial system but concentrated in a single many-sided and far-reaching act." (See William Sanday and A.C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans: International Critical Commentary*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1964), p. 92.) The emphasis in the atonement is not on the forced death of the animal which has no choice, but on the voluntary offering of Jesus who gave himself lovingly and willingly for the sins of mankind.

In Rom. 3:19-31 Paul makes one of the most profound statements in the entire Bible. In this statement is wrapped up the very genius of God revealed in the redemption of mankind. In this passage Paul opens the mind of God to us so that we can see God's thinking in the development

of the gospel message as it reveals the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The depth of our own understanding of redemption through atonement is constantly challenged by these verses. One cannot come to this passage with a devotional and investigative mind without leaving it with marked humility. In addition, no matter how many times we study that passage, it never loses its depth of thought or its challenge to our own gratitude for this unspeakable gift.

One of Jesus' statements on the cross may hold an important key to our understanding of the necessity of his death. Matthew tells us that while on the cross, Jesus cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Matt. 27:46. Some of those standing by apparently thought that Jesus was calling on Elijah for deliverance. Matthew, however, tells us that Jesus was calling on God. The quotation is from Psalms 22:1, and was used rhetorically by the Hebrew people. In times of great grief the Israelites asked the symbolic question, "God, why have you forsaken me?" However, this question by Jesus is not symbolic. It holds the very profound truth that at this point Jesus was completely separated from God – he went through hell for us by experiencing this total alienation from the Father. This is part of eternal condemnation, *i.e.* eternity without any kind of manifestation of God. In this way we can see a little more clearly that in the atonement Christ indeed, paid the price for our sin. The penalty for sin was not his physical death, but his spiritual death; a complete separation from God. It appears from this statement on the cross that at this moment Christ was truly separated from the Father, and experienced that state of "hell" for us. All of us will die physically, so the physical death of Jesus cannot be seen as the act of atonement. Others have suffered as much agony as he did when they met a torturous death. After all, sinless babies have died horrible undeserved deaths, so the physical death of Jesus does not tell the story of atonement. This experience of Christ's "spiritual death" – separation from God – was the ultimate price he willingly paid for our sins.

It was God who wanted to forgive, God who took the initiative in bringing reconciliation, God who provided the victim – his own Son – and God who suffered the loss and thus paid the infinite price. Paul summed it up very well in his short statement that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," II Cor. 5:19. We become the beneficiaries of this great sacrifice, not by trusting in our own works of merit, but by completely trusting in the atonement of Christ.

The Flesh

In Romans, as in many of his other writings, Paul uses the word "flesh" extensively. At times he uses it in a non-moral sense referring to human flesh – the stuff we are made of. More often however he uses the word in an ethical sense as part of his description of the inner man, or the seat of evil desire. Frequently he uses this word when speaking of the conflict between right and wrong speaking of the Spirit warring against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit. In Rom. 7:25 – 8:17 we have an extended description of Paul's use of this word. In 7:18 he speaks categorically of the fact that, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful nature." The word "flesh" is a translation of the Greek word (σαρξ – *sarx*). In the NIV it occurs as "sinful nature." Almost all other translations render it by the word "flesh" which is the correct translation of the word. While the expression "sinful nature" may capture Paul's meaning at this point, it is not really a translation but an interpretation which leans toward Calvinism. In Rom. 7:14-25 Paul speaks of the Spirit warring against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit, and he sees the

grace of God as the only solution to this conflict.

The idea of the flesh being a kind of depository for evil is not unique to the New Testament. It is seen in some Hellenistic writings and also in Rabbinic Judaism. Paul uses it vividly in Romans as well as in Galatians to identify the sinful characteristics of man apart from Christ but he does not always use it in this way. He does not consider the flesh, that is, one's body of flesh and bones, as sinful in its origin or nature as the Gnostics later taught. In Gal. 2:20 he speaks of his own life "in the flesh," and also of glorifying God "in his flesh." In this place the NIV translates σαρξ (*sarx*) by the word "body" rather than "flesh." The King James Version sometimes translates this word as "carnal." This pinpoints the importance of understanding the word as Paul uses it rather than considering it only in a strict literal sense to refer to flesh and bone.

The Law

The Law, in the mind of the Jews, consisted of the first five books of our Old Testament, not just Exodus 20 through Leviticus 27. Throughout the Pentateuch the Jews saw the hand of God working from Abraham to Moses, demonstrating the Father's care and concern for the people he had claimed as his own children. However Paul usually refers to the Law as that which was revealed at Sinai, four hundred thirty years after the promise to Abraham. See Gal. 3:17.

In the mind of the Hebrew people, the word "law" covered a wide range of meaning and ideas. Jewish legalism certainly existed in New Testament times, but it was probably not as extensive as some believe. It is not until after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, that we have the widespread excessive legalism which some have superimposed on the Judaism of Christ's day.

The Law as a written code brought many images and emotions to the minds of the Hebrew people. Psalm 19 and Psalm 119 describe it as divinely given, a source of great delight, energy, and inspiration, the object of meditation, and the source of guidance in life and worship. It was interpreted differently by different groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and there were conflicts among the first century rabbis concerning its use and how it should be applied. It is incorrect to lump all Jewish attitudes of Paul's day into a sort of legalism characterized by hypocrisy and self-righteousness. True, these attitudes existed in many quarters, especially among some Pharisees of Jesus' day, but we must view the Jews circumspectly regarding their attitudes toward the Law.

Statements from Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Acts, and the letters of Paul, help us gain a more nearly correct view of the Jews and the Law during the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. The Pharisaic view of the role of tradition distorted the true function of both tradition and the Law. Josephus says that the Pharisees were generally known for their strict interpretation of the Law. Their high regard for tradition, the Law, and a tendency toward separatism led to the self-righteousness which Jesus frequently addressed. Paul's statements in Rom. 3:20 and Gal. 2:15-17 demonstrate the problem in the mind of some first century Christian Jews concerning the efficacy of works of the Law in their justification.

The Jews of Paul's day held that the Law was of divine origin, and constituted God's revelation to his people. It was God's discipline for Israel. The exodus event was Israel's deliverance from

Egyptian slavery. Their experience at Mt. Sinai pictures a mass of people who were “saved” (delivered) from slavery and received instructions from God. These instructions basically said, “As God’s ‘redeemed people,’ live your lives in a way which reflects his mercy and your redemption.” It was at Mt. Sinai that this mass of people became a nation with its religious, civil, criminal, and hygienic laws, etc. given by God. Thus, they became a theocracy. Paul indirectly uses the exodus event to illustrate the contrast between being slaves of sin on the one hand, and living as free people in Christ on the other hand.

The Law was known under a variety of descriptive names in Psalms 19:7-11. It is referred to as the law of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the precepts of the Lord, the commandments of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the ordinances of the Lord. The psalmist is not trying to differentiate between various categories of the Law, but is using normal poetic style to accomplish his purpose. The Law is described as having the power to revive the soul, as a trustworthy guide to bring wisdom, as a fountain of joy to the heart, and as the source of light to the eyes. The Psalmist says that the Law endures forever, is altogether righteous, more precious than gold, sweeter than honey, the source of warning so that a person might not fall into sin and transgressions. It is also the source of great reward. This description of the value of the Law shows that the Hebrew people held it in the highest esteem and had profound reverence for it. Of course, this was not a universal attitude as is demonstrated in their frequent apostasy and finally the Exile.

What was Paul’s attitude toward the Law? He never repudiated its divine origin, and as a Pharisee, he was raised to believe in its supreme importance, and also the importance of the traditions. Among some of the Pharisees these two elements led to self righteousness. Jesus’ parable of the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:10-12 describes this. The Pharisee’s feeling of superior righteousness is compared to the humility of the tax collector, emphasizing that justification did not come from one’s own adherence to the Law and tradition, but from one’s dependence on the mercy of God. The arrogant attitude of some of the Pharisees shows that a number of them placed very little emphasis on personal guilt of sin, and the consequent necessity of divine forgiveness.

In the mind of some Jews of Jesus’ day, when one violated the Torah – Law—he obtained forgiveness by various ceremonial acts such as sacrifices, washings, etc. Those who held to this view of forgiveness believed that since the Gentiles did not have the Law they had no access to God’s forgiveness. Therefore the universality of the gospel presented a real problem for these Jews. The natural conclusion to this was that outside of the Torah covenant there was no salvation. The word “salvation” in the Old Testament and in first century Judaism was not the same as the Christian view of heaven and the doctrine of immortality. The belief in immortality and an afterlife were sources of conflict between Pharisees and Sadducees.

Paul’s statement in Gal. 2:16 is parallel to that in Rom. 3:20, “No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” In both of these passages the Greek text does not have the definite article before the word “law.” Although Paul certainly has the Law of Moses in mind, the absence of the definite article broadens the statement. The effect of Paul’s statement is that the nature and function of law – any law – is not to forgive, but to define. In its simplest form, the reason we know something is wrong (violation) is because there is a law or principle of moral integrity which defines right behavior.

Once that law or principle is violated (sin), the violator can never again claim legal righteousness. Nor can his future obedience ever erase (forgive) the violation. Paul applies this principle to the Law of Moses but it is also characteristic of all law whether secular or religious.

In Rom. 5:1-2 Paul shows that peace within man can never be accomplished by law, but only by grace through faith. Religious Law, when it stands alone, only brings conflict and frustration, because a person can never have complete assurance that he has “done enough” to satisfy Law’s demands. In addition he might not be completely informed about the requirements of the Law or he might have violated the Law unintentionally or unknowingly. Therefore there is never any “assurance of salvation” for that person. Paul states this by saying “what the Law could not do in that it was weak in the flesh,” Christ did by coming in the form of sinful flesh, and offered atonement for sin. Law, by awakening man to his condition of guilt, brought him face to face with the despair of his lost condition and his complete inability to save himself through the operation of Law. The Law of Moses then accomplished exactly what it was designed to accomplish, namely to bring a knowledge of sin. So the Law was not designed as a savior, nor should it ever have been thought of as a “plan of salvation.” Many Jews (but certainly not all of them), in their striving to be self-sufficient in spiritual matters had come to consider the Law as a means of justification. The Law had become more and more complex because it had been dressed with the traditions and the non-biblical burdens of religious observances and it was thought by many to be intolerable. See Peter’s statement in Acts 15:16.

Having shown that justification could never come from law, Paul begins speaking of his own experience of frustration and despair. He had been a very religious and devout Jew but was mistaken about the Messiahship of Jesus and probably the nature of justification and the function of the Law. From the point of view of some of the Jewish Christians addressed in Romans, God’s justice was pictured like balancing weights on a scale. “Do my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds?” In such a scenario man’s relationship to God would be based generally on fear rather than a fellowship of love. In Rom. 5:1-2, Paul says, “Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” The meaning of this is that faith – trust in Christ’s atonement rather than trust in our own goodness – gives us access to God’s gift of forgiveness and reconciliation through Christ’s sacrifice. It is this sacrifice which brings justification not our own good life. Therefore we can have peace with God because we know that our salvation is secure. Meritorious works can never bring this peace. They only bring the frustration of wondering, “Have I done enough today? Could (should) I have done more?”

This does not mean that the Law was worthless, or failed in its function. It did exactly what God designed it to do, namely to define and identify (bring a knowledge of) sin. Therefore Paul could rightfully say to Timothy, “the law is good if used properly.” See I Tim. 1:8.

Salvation and the Law

Freedom from sin (salvation) does not release man into an ethical vacuum, but into a relationship with God which is very demanding. This freedom is not license to live as one pleases. Salvation is not just future hope; it is also a present experience, and one’s life must reflect this experience.

In this newly found relationship, everything mankind needs becomes available through Christ – security, peace of mind, inward assurance, and confidence in meeting life’s demands and its problems. All of these are found in Christ, not because of man’s reformation of life, but because man, through grace has entered into a new relationship with God which results in man’s submission to God’s will. In turn, this new relationship has brought a new and different perspective to all aspects of his life. Sin is seen as both guilt and bondage, but salvation brings both justification and redemption.

Grace

The Greek word translated “grace” is **χαρις** (*charis*). Paul’s writings make up about 33% of the New Testament and the non-Pauline writings make up about 67%. The word **χαρις** (*charis*) occurs in Paul’s writings more than one hundred times, but only about fifty-five times in the remainder of the New Testament. This shows that Paul’s use of the word strongly dominates its occurrences in the New Testament. Therefore it is very important that we understand Paul’s use of the word if we are to understand the meaning of the gospel.

The word **χαρις** (*charis*) may be translated in a variety of ways and it was in common use in secular Greek culture. However it was seldom used in a religious context. Generally it was used to refer to a thing of physical beauty, charm and loveliness, attractiveness, or pleasantness. A few times in Paul’s writings it is used in this way but most often it carries its basic meaning of “a free gift.” William D. Mounce describes it as “the acceptance of and goodness toward those who cannot earn or do not deserve such gain.” (William D. Mounce, *Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce general editor, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press), 2006, pp. 303-304.) The gift was given without any element of obligation on the part of the giver.

The Greeks used a number of words which we translate as “gift” and “give.” One of these was the word **ελεος** (*eleos*) which usually refers to an act of compassion, mercy, or pity. This may be in the form of a gift or an action. A frequently used word, also translated “gift,” was **διδωμι** (*didōmi*). This is a verb which generally refers to the giving of a gift which may be presented either out of the goodness of one’s heart or out of a sense of obligation, repayment, or recognition of service, etc. Each of us may give or receive gifts which are presented as an expression of love, respect, appreciation, etc. for something received or for someone whom we respect or admire. Giving such gifts would generally be expressed in Greek by the word **διδωμι** (*didōmi*).

As stated above, the idea underlying the word **χαρις** (*charis*) is a purely free gift in which the giver has no sense of obligation or payment for services. The recipient of **χαρις** (*charis*) may even be hostile toward the giver. Such a gift is truly “unearned, unmerited, and undeserved.” The New Testament uses this word frequently, and applies it to many types of gifts. William Barclay expresses the unmerited character of **χαρις** (*charis*) in this way: “Grace has always in it the idea of a gift which is completely free and entirely undeserved. The idea of grace and merit are mutually exclusive and completely contradictory. No one can earn grace; it can only be humbly, gratefully, and adoringly received.” (William Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 155.) See also Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VI, Gerhard Kittel, editor, (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans

Publishing Company, 1967) and Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, fourth printing, 1963, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1880), pp. 166-171.)

From a religious point of view this idea was a bit foreign to the Jewish mind. When considering the relationship between God and man the Jews usually thought along the line of obedience to the Law. Paul's teaching about grace precludes the possibility of anyone acquiring merit through operation of law, or through a person obeying any kind of law. Two important facts emerge when looking at Paul's use of this word. First, grace is always God's initiative – the offering of a “free gift” from God to mankind. Second, grace comes through the medium of Jesus Christ. William Sanday speaks of the force of “unearned favor” as the primary emphasis of the word as Paul uses it. There is “stress upon the fact that it is unearned, and therefore as bestowed not upon the righteous but on sinners (cf. esp. Rom. 5:6 with v. 2). In this sense the word takes a prominent place in the vocabulary of Justification. . . . The cause being put for the effect *χαρις* denotes (a) ‘the state of grace or favor’ which the Christian enjoys (Rom. 5:2) or (b) like *χαρισμα* [*charisma*] any particular gift or gifts of grace.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.)

God's grace (his gifts) comes to us from his generosity. The whole idea of forgiveness is wrapped up in grace. John expressed it by saying, “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” John 1:17. There is a paradoxical truth also to be considered. On many occasions Paul attributes all good within himself to the grace of God working in him. “By the grace of God I am what I am,” “yet not I, but the grace of God . . .” These statements however, are to be held in harmony with personal responsibility for one's actions.

Some have thought of grace as removing or reducing the need for obedience. Some excuse faulty behavior by saying, “After all, we're saved by grace.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German theologian who was executed because he decried the Third Reich during World War II. He wrote and spoke eloquently of grace:

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price for which the merchant will sell all his goods [in order to procure it]. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. . . Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.

Faith

In the gospels the word *πιστις* (*pistis*) usually carries with it the idea of belief in the miracles of Jesus, his Messiahship, or belief that the claims he made for himself are true. In these instances however Jesus is calling for more than an intellectual acknowledgment of himself or God. James

uses the word in reference to one's belief in the existence of God, but also shows that it must express itself in one's life. See Jms. 2:14-26. In each of these uses, the idea of an active faith is always dominant.

In John's gospel, the word is almost always in its verb form pertaining to one's belief in the Messiahship of Jesus and other claims which Jesus made for himself. A few times in the New Testament the word is applied to a body of belief such as in Jude 3 and Eph 4:4-5. In Heb. 4:2 and 11:14-38 the writer used the word to apply to the fact that men of old showed their faith by their actions. A few times it is used in connection with an individual's personal convictions about his own behavior as in Rom. 14:22-23.

In any language, words can have a variety of meanings, and the emphasis of a word may depend on the particular author's use of the word and the context in which the word appears. In the New Testament the emphasis of the word faith varies from one writer to another and from one context to another. When we compare its use in the writings of Paul to its use in James, in Hebrews, or in the words of Jesus, we find marked differences in the emphasis and use of this word.

Faith is one of Paul's favorite words. He sometimes uses it to mean one's fidelity to God, or God's fidelity to his promises. See Rom. 3:3. In Rom. 12:3, 6 the apostle's emphasis is more toward faith as the foundation of the Christian's exercise of certain gifts bestowed by God. Paul uses the faith of Abraham to illustrate the necessity of faith as it relates to our justification. In Romans and Galatians the emphasis of the word is on complete trust. This is Paul's basic thrust in each of his letters. Understanding his particular use of "faith" is basic to understanding his teaching on justification. Notice also Rom. 5:1-2 where he shows that our access to God's grace is through faith, *i.e.* trust.

Paul introduces the word in Rom. 1:5, stating that obedience comes from one's faith. He begins developing the idea early in the Roman letter, Rom. 1:16-17. The root idea of Christian faith is one's belief in the Messiahship and divinity of Jesus. Paul does not present an apologetic on the important issue of the Messiahship of Jesus. Instead, he treats it as a foregone conclusion. His encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus remained vividly etched in his thought, and that was the basis of his faith.

Paul's "Bible" was the Old Testament, and he never considered it anything less than God's word. In addition, he had been an ardent and well trained Pharisee. As a child of Abraham, it was natural for him to turn to Abraham when thinking about the doctrine of "faith." Although the word is seldom used in the Old Testament, either in the original language or in translations, its use with Abraham is pivotal in the history of Israel and in Paul's teaching and in his own experience.

Two Old Testament uses of the word "faith" were dominant with the apostle. One is in Gen. 15:6, "Abram believed God, and he credited it to him as righteousness." Paul quoted this in Rom. 4:3. The other is in Habakkuk 2:4, "but the righteous shall live by his faith." This is quoted by Paul in Rom. 1:17. The Greek word is *πιστις* (*pistis*) which is generally translated "faith, belief, trust, or assurance."

The Habakkuk quotation needs further comments. The prophet lived at a time when God's people were sinful, corrupt, dishonest, and immoral. In addition idolatry was rampant. Habakkuk did not understand why the God of holiness, purity, and righteousness could allow this condition to continue. Habakkuk complained to God. He felt that God was not listening to him and that through God's inaction "the law is paralyzed and justice never prevails." Hab. 1:4. ("God, you are to blame for all of this chaos!") God answered him by saying that unbelievable things were going to happen. God was going to raise up the Babylonians to come and punish the evildoers of Israel. Habakkuk was not very well pleased with this because it seemed to him that God was using one group of evil people – the Babylonians – to punish another group of evil people – Judah. Simply stated, Habakkuk said, "God I can't understand why you would do a thing like that. You are using a more evil nation to punish a less evil nation."

In this context Paul finds his key quotation. God basically said to Habakkuk, "Your schedule is not my schedule. Your time to act is not my time to act. Your method of punishing evil is not my method of punishing evil. However, just trust me. I'm going to do what needs to be done." Out of this comes God's statement to Habakkuk; "But the righteous will live by his faith." Habakkuk was challenged to *trust* in God to do the right thing about the evil which was so evident. Habakkuk learned the lesson of trust in God. No matter what appears on the horizon of life, God is sovereign and his will is going to be accomplished. With this sense of trust in God Habakkuk concluded with one of the most beautiful statements of faith found in the entire Bible.

"Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.

The Sovereign Lord is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.
Hab. 3:17-19.

We attach a variety of meanings to the word "faith." Among the most common are confidence, trust, belief in a proposition, and reliability. Although Paul's use of the word involves belief in certain propositions (the resurrection, the deity of Jesus, etc.) the preponderance of his use of the word involves much more. When viewed in its context, and particularly in the context of Habakkuk, his statement concerning "faith in Jesus Christ" (Rom. 3:22) shows how the gospel operates in the human mind. Its emphasis is complete trust. There is a contrast between trusting in "works" for justification (which, in Paul's mind, would be self-justification), or trusting in the work of Christ – the atonement – for one's justification. This atonement becomes the means God uses to impart His own righteousness to unrighteous man. Man becomes clothed with a part of God himself. He is regenerated; he is born again. "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." Gal. 2:20.

Faith as the operative component in our justification is not unreasonable, but it is beyond reason. Unrighteous man, helpless to justify himself regardless of how sacrificial, energetic, and devoted his life might be, is required to trust in Christ's atonement for his justification. Faith is not merely the acceptance of the propositional truth of Christ's divinity, his resurrection, etc. These are foregone conclusions. Instead, faith is that trusting commitment of one's whole life to the atonement of Christ, and this trust expresses itself in devotion, obedience, sacrifice, etc. These changes of behavior and devotion are never viewed as a means of courting God's favor, but they are the sinner's expression of his profound and inexpressible gratitude for what Christ did for him on the cross. Paul could not conceive of faith which did not produce obedience. In Rom. 10:1-3 he speaks of the Jews who did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God, but sought to establish a righteousness of their own. Notice that Paul speaks of the necessity of "submitting" to the righteousness of God.

Obedience

If justification came by meritorious works, the emphasis in the Christian life would be primarily on obedience designed to appease the wrath of an exacting, angry God rather than on obedience as an expression of gratitude and an abiding loving relationship to the heavenly Father.

But there is an interlocking of these two elements. God's grace does not in any way reduce man's responsibility to obey. In fact, Paul warns repeatedly against a life of disobedience or a refusal to positively obey God, stating that the wrath of God shall come to those who refuse to obey. Rom. 2:8-9. However, Paul notes that grace gives greater meaning to obedience, because the motivation is now based primarily on love, rather than fear of punishment or the expectation of reward. Rather than obeying God in order to "justify" himself (that is to become righteous in God's sight) and to appease God, obedience which is motivated by grace comes primarily from gratitude for God's love and Christ's atoning sacrifice. Obedience under these circumstances is not less important, but a great deal more important. The "spirit of the law" becomes even more demanding than the "letter of the law." To take the position that grace reduces the importance of obedience is a misunderstanding which leads to one of the pitfalls Paul warns us against; "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" Rom. 6:1.

Some believe that a strong emphasis on obedience leans toward "salvation by works." The concept of "salvation by works" is not foreign to modern man. The average "man on the street" who believes there is some sort of heaven and hell may be asked if he believes he will "go to heaven when he dies." He almost invariably says, "Yes." The follow-up question and its answer are all-important. "Why do you believe you will go to heaven?" Answer: "I keep the Ten Commandments, I pay my taxes, I'm kind to people, I help others, I'm honest, a good family man, a good father, etc., etc., etc." This implicitly says, "I believe my goodness will overcome (forgive?) my badness" – that I have earned a spot in heaven. In such a situation little or no attention is given to the idea of guilt, sin, atonement, trust, obedience, grace, etc.

When legal righteousness is considered determinative in a person's relationship with God it is based primarily on the assumption that through a life of goodness (obedience), one receives justification from God – salvation. On the other hand, Paul's thesis is, "What we could not do for ourselves through obedience to the law, God did for us through Jesus Christ." Paul uses the

Greek word **αδυνατον** (*adunaton*) “powerless” in Rom. 8:3-4 to express the fact that the Law was “powerless” to accomplish justification – it could not be done by the Law of Moses or by any other law. Once again, we must remember that the function of any law, divine or human, is to define, not to forgive. Salvation through faith is not the popular idea of “trusting in Christ as your personal Savior,” but the comprehensive submission of one’s own will to the will of God. Such submission is not salvation by works of merit, but the expression of a person’s trust in the atonement of Christ. Obedience then is the fruit or product of trust (faith).

The Faith of Abraham in the Writings of Paul and James

Both Paul and James refer to Abraham as the prime example of faith, but they use this great patriarch in very different ways. The perceived conflict between Paul and James has been a significant difficulty for many people who have studied these two writers. Luther and others have had a difficult time seeing compatibility between the two, and a variety of explanations have been given throughout the history of interpretation. When investigating this we need to recognize both the presence and importance of this problem. In this, as in all other Biblical texts, “context is everything.”

We must remember that Paul and James have different starting points and different objectives. Both use the words faith, works, and justification but each shows a different application of the words somewhat like the use of the word “faith” in the writings of Paul compared with the same word in the writings of John. Since many words in almost all languages have a variety of meanings it is very important that we give close attention to the context of both Paul and James to see how they are using these important words. In this way the message of each of these two writers becomes clearer. Paul, in speaking of works in the context of Abraham’s situation, is referring the Jewish concept of the importance of circumcision and the idea of some Jewish Christian concerning the merit which they believed was gained through keeping the Law. He shows that Abraham’s justification was pronounced prior to either circumcision or the giving of the Law of Moses. (See also Gal. 3:16.) When James speaks of works, is not referring to the Jewish-Christian idea of meritorious works of the Law or of the necessity of circumcision in one’s justification. Instead he is speaking of the necessity of a faith which is obedient and active. He is showing that Abraham’s faith led him to obey God. This was the evidence of his faith.

In Romans, and some of Paul’s other writings he frequently emphasizes one’s need for complete trust in the atonement of Christ rather than trust in his own goodness or obedience to law and ceremony for forgiveness and salvation. Paul cannot conceive of a person who has died with Christ, has been baptized into his death, and has been raised to newness of life not living a life compatible with his new-born nature. Works of faith and works of love are upheld by Paul as expressions of the Christian’s new life in Christ. This usage is comparable to James’ emphasis on works of obedience. In Eph. 2:10, Paul says, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.” The Greek word here translated “works” is **εργον**, (*ergon*) meaning “a work, an action, or a deed.” In I Thess. 1:3 Paul expresses his gratitude to the Thessalonians for “your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope.” The Greek word here translated “work” is the same as used by Paul in Eph. 2:10 and by James in Jms. 2:14-26. In Gal. 5:6 Paul says, “The only thing that counts is your faith expressing itself through love.” The Greek word translated “expressing itself” is **ενεργεω**, *energeo* which

means “to put into operation.” This is a compound word made up of the preposition *εν en* and *εργεω, ergeo*. The word *εργεω, ergeo* is the verb form of *εργον, ergon* which is translated “works” in Jms. 2:14-26. It is clear from these and other passages that Paul emphasizes the importance of “works” in the Christian life but these are not “works of merit” but works of faithful and grateful obedience.

Thus, when Paul writes that works are insufficient he is referring to their inability to bring justification, forgiveness, and salvation. When James writes that “faith without works is dead,” he is writing about the folly that faith requires nothing more than an intellectual ascent to the existence of God or the divinity of Christ. James reminds his readers that “the demons believe and shutter.” Paul cites Abraham’s justification before God as complete trust in the power and fidelity of God to fulfill his promise, even though it seemed impossible to Abraham at the time. See Rom. 4:18-21. James cites Abraham’s faith as that’s which led him to obey God contrasted with the dead faith of mental ascent to God’s existence. See Jms. 2:21-24 and Gen. 22.

James uses the word “justification” to carry the meaning of right vs. wrong, or the importance of living a righteous life. Paul, on the other hand uses this word to mean God’s power to impart his own righteousness to sinful man in forgiveness and adoption into the family of God. James’ statements do not contradict those of Paul. Instead, James’ point of departure is different from that of Paul. Paul does not speak against the idea or the importance of law. In Rom. 7:12 he writes “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous, and good.” In I Tim. 1:8 he says, “The law is good if one uses it properly.” Valid faith for both Paul and James is seen by combining one’s trust in the atonement of Christ with a life of obedience which reflects the newness of life into which one has entered by way of the new birth.

Timeliness of the Book

The book of Romans attacks sin, man’s most fundamental problem. Sin not only stands between man and God, but between man and his fellows. The practical issues of daily living, as enumerated and discussed in chapters 12-16, are not limited to first century society. The book gives the basis for understanding a Christian’s relationship with God through Christ. The message of Romans is applicable to all generations because the book deals with lasting values such as man’s righteousness and unrighteousness, the need for forgiveness, and the frustrations which attend the realization of personal guilt. One of the presuppositions of the book is that man’s happy existence both in this life and in the life to come depends on his relationship to God. Only when man experiences this bond to God through Christ can his relationship to his fellow man be complete. This bond with God brings freedom from the slavery of sin, and liberty in Christ.

The liberty provided in Christ is not license to do whatever a person wishes, but it is the opportunity for man to reach his full human potential by living responsibly under the sovereignty of God and thus to become all that God intends him to be. This liberty along with the discipline of the newness of life seems paradoxical, but Paul contends that it is the happiest estate for mankind and the only view of the God-man relationship that is consistent with the regenerated nature of man and the basic character of God.

Romans and History

Paul shows that Christian theology is rooted in history. This, in turn, shows God's intervention in the history of Israel which led to the entrance of the incarnate Christ into the world. Christianity then is a historical religion. Paul does not present and define a variety of religious theories and codes for righteous living. Instead, in chapters 9 – 11 he makes strong use of God's work in the history of his people. He shows how Israel misunderstood its own role in God's plan. Both the Old and New Testaments take into account the nature of history. God, as he is pictured in the Old Testament, was not sitting down watching the world go by, waiting for an opportune time to introduce Christ into the world. Instead, he was sovereign and dynamic in molding and shaping a variety of circumstances which ultimately led to his own Son moving onto the stage of human history. In Gal. 4:4-5 Paul said, "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." ASV.

Thus, Israel in the Old Testament was not simply one nation of the world acting and reacting to the surrounding nations and circumstances but it was carrying out God's plan in spite of its own disobedience and apostasy. History then is seen as the stage on which God discloses himself. In fact, history in both the Old and New Testaments shows a sovereign God, working among men to bring about his purposes, but without violating the moral freedom of choice which he has granted to mankind.

Chapter III

An Overview of Romans

Joseph Fitzmyer divided the polemic section of the book, 1:16—11:36, into three sections. Following the salutation and introduction, 1:1-15, Paul moves on to the first part of his argument, 1:16—4:25. In that section he discusses the topic of justification by grace through faith. In the second section, 5:1—8:39, he discusses important life-changing results of this teaching on justification. Redemption, reconciliation, peace with God, and other consequences of justification bring blessings and obligations to which Paul gives specific attention and clarifies possible misunderstandings. The final section of his argument, 9:1—11:36, deals with the important topic of God's sovereignty, Israel's misunderstanding of her own mission, her rejection of Christ and the gospel and the future hope of the Hebrew people. (Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: Romans*, (New York: Doubleday), 1992, pp. 96-98.)

Throughout the history of Christianity the book of Romans has played a prominent role. Many commentaries and other books have been written on this epistle. Because it is the most comprehensive and systematic statement of Christian theology in the New Testament, many important religious reform movements have employed this epistle as their basis.

Introduction: 1:1-7.

The book begins with Paul's conventional salutation to the church, with an additional statement that he has been "set apart for the gospel of God." With this phrase, he immediately sets the stage for the basic theme of the letter. Although he had not visited Rome prior to the writing of the epistle, he had many friends there, and he seems to have had excellent knowledge of the situation in Rome. In verse 4 he affirms the resurrection of Christ, which becomes an important part of his statements concerning the atonement. He continues the salutation through Rom. 1:7, affirming his apostleship, and his mission to the Gentiles.

I. The Theme of Romans: 1:8-17.

After his salutation Paul begins his introduction of the subject matter of the epistle. He expresses his gratitude for the church's faith, and commends the church's fine reputation. He then expresses his desire to share a spiritual blessing with the church, that their mutual faith might be strengthened. He tells them that he had planned to come to Rome but was prevented from doing so. He also says that his desire is to share the gospel with all mankind – both Jews and Greeks – because he considers himself a debtor to all people.

Although the message of the gospel could, in some circles, be a subject of ridicule and have certain humiliating components to it, Paul states that he is not ashamed of the good news of Jesus Christ, for it is God's power to save. He affirms that in the gospel God has revealed the uniqueness of his own righteousness – his way of imparting to man a part of himself, thus making an unrighteous man into a righteous person. This comes through faith, just as the prophet Habakkuk had spoken.

II. Sin, Man's Fundamental Problem: 1:18—3:18.

God's wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness of men.

1:18-32. Paul notes that God's invisible qualities, his creation, his power, and his nature have been clearly seen. As Ps. 19 states, the heavens themselves declare his glory. Therefore men have no excuse for not believing in God and knowing him.

Paul discusses the depravity that resulted from man's ignoring God. Behavior which was little better than that of brute beasts led men to invent gods of their own, and the pantheon which they created did nothing more than reflect their own degenerate image. Thus a vicious cycle was established in which people became more and more like the degenerate gods they had created. Paul then proceeds to describe the sinful state of mankind.

Although the sins listed here are thought by many commentators to be "sins of the Gentiles," it seems more nearly accurate to say that Paul is describing "general world conditions" since the fall of man. Indeed, ancient secular history as well as the Old Testament shows that all mankind, including the Israelites, frequently were guilty of the sins which Paul describes. These sins are set forth in three categories.

1. Because people failed to glorify God, and were ungrateful, they experienced a darkening of their sensitivities toward God. Pride in their own wisdom became their downfall.
2. As a result, God gave them up to sinful sexual desires which became part of their worship and their service to created things rather than to the Creator of all things. Their shameful lusts led to unnatural sexual conduct including homosexuality. This led to the conclusion that it was not necessary to know God.
3. Therefore God gave them over to depraved minds to exercise their "freedom" in envy, murder, disobedience to parents, arrogance, etc. Even though they knew God had decreed death to those who did these things, they continued to do them, and approved of others who practiced the same things.

2:1-16. The religious Jews had every right to look on the previous scene with the greatest disgust and disdain, and they perceived a great difference between their own moral, ethical, and religious character and that of the world in general. There was certainly a contrast between the conduct of the Jews and that of the rest of the world but Paul indicts the Jews for their arrogance and self-righteousness, showing that righteousness is not the result of a person making the choice of the lesser of two evils or one's stern condemnation of the sins of others. He does this by asking a group of rhetorical questions.

1. "You who teach others do you not teach yourselves?" 2:21
2. "You who preach against stealing do you steal?" 2:21
3. "You who say people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?" 2:22
4. "You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" 2:22
5. "You who brag about the Law, do you dishonor God by breaking the Law?" 2:23

Paul notes that in condemning others, the Jews were condemning themselves, for in principle they were committing many of the same sins. How did these Jews expect to escape the judgment of God? Those who constantly obey sin are slaves of sin, whether Jew or Gentile, and God does not ignore the sins of any people. Paul repeats this principle throughout the epistle.

Possession of truth does not guarantee a righteous relationship with God. Thus, it is not those who hear the law who are righteous, but those who obey the law. If a Gentile, who did not receive the Law, instinctively performed the things written in the Law, and did so conscientiously, he shows the law written in his heart.

2:17-29. Paul states that the Jewish Christians are mistakenly relying on two things for their salvation. First they were relying on their knowledge of the Law and second they relied on their status as descendants of the great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). Neither of these is sufficient. Possession of truth is not tantamount to practicing truth, and God's name is evil spoken of among the Gentiles because of the Jew's arrogant conduct.

Similarly, physical circumcision will not, in itself, guarantee that God will accept a Jew in spite of that person's disobedience. A disobedient Jew, although circumcised in the flesh, is sinful regardless of the external sign of the covenant, and the uncircumcised Gentile who obeys God is circumcised in the heart, and is inwardly a "Jew."

3:1-8. This repudiation would have been devastating to some of the Jewish Christians to whom Paul was writing. Some seemed to have placed great confidence in the fact that they were the "chosen people," had been the exclusive recipients of the Law, and had been given the covenant of circumcision. Paul pictures them as asking, "So, is there then any advantage to being a Jew?" Paul assures them that there are great advantages, but preferential treatment regarding salvation is not one of them.

Paul notes that one great advantage was being entrusted with the very words of God. Paul also assures the Jewish Christians that God is always faithful, and that his promises are absolutely sure, no matter how unfaithful Israel might have been.

In fact the unrighteousness of mankind shows the righteousness of God more clearly but Paul cautions against arguing that therefore, it should be all right to sin so that God's goodness may appear in bolder relief. He states that people who argue in that manner deserve condemnation.

3:9-18. The concluding fact of this section of the book is that both Jews and Gentiles – indeed all the world – are condemned before God. Jews, Paul says, are not any better than the sinful Gentiles. All are condemned because there is no one who is really righteous – without sin. To illustrate this he cites a collection of passages from Psalms, and concludes that sin – unrighteousness – is the true basic problem of mankind.

III. Justification: The Seriousness of Sin and God's Intervention. 3:19—4:25.

3:19-20. Sin is very serious. It is absolutely destructive. It is in fact damnable, and we are all guilty. Therefore we are all equally in need of justification. Law, whether the Law of Moses

or any other, is unable to do the job of justification. Law only brings the knowledge of sin – brings sin to our consciousness. Law never forgives; it only defines. Is there a solution? Can man be justified at all? If not by law, then how?

3:21-31. Paul begins this section by affirming that the Law and Prophets testified to a “righteousness from God apart from law,” which God has revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Here Paul reverts to Rom. 1:17 where he stated that in the gospel God’s righteousness is revealed. This section explains how that operates.

First, righteousness comes from God, not from man’s own merit. Second, it is appropriated to everyone by faith. This is the case for both Jews and Gentiles because “all have sinned” according to Rom. 3:23 and all are therefore equally in need of justification. Justification comes as a gift from God, not from meritorious works of the individual. The initiative is with God and justification is God’s gift (grace, *χαρις*, *charis*). God’s means of providing this gift is the atonement through Christ which constitutes God’s righteous plan to bring about man’s justification. Paul’s statement about the atonement is not based on human reason but on God’s gracious gift of Christ. In effect Paul says, “For your justification you are going to *trust* either in the atonement of Christ or in your own goodness (meritorious works). The fact is that justification can only come through God’s gift (grace) and your only access to his grace is your complete trust in the atonement of Christ.”

Sin presents a problem which only atonement can solve. God, in his very nature, must be just (Rom. 3:26) but in his mercy and love he wants to bring mankind back to himself for eternity. Man is a sinful creature, and God’s justice demands that the price of sin be paid, so God is faced with a grave “problem.” Since “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), man is doomed. How can God be just (and therefore be consistent with that component of his nature), and at the same time be the merciful justifier of sinful man? The answer is in the atonement offered by Christ. Rom. 3:26-27.

Because no man is sinless, no man ever has the right to boast that his good life is part of the instrument of his justification. Thus a man must be “justified by faith [trust] apart from observing the law” Rom. 3:28. Paul’s statement is broad. No law, divine or human, has the power to justify mankind in the sight of God. It was never God’s intent that the Law of Moses be the instrument of justification for the Jews.

4:1-25. In these verses Paul discusses the example of Abraham. He states that if Abraham had been justified by his own good life he would have a basis on which to boast. However the Old Testament says “Abraham *believed* God and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Paul quotes this passage, Gen. 15:6, in Rom. 4:1-3. If someone pays me for my work, that payment would constitute wages which I deserve. Therefore I would have every right to take pride in my work. However, if I receive an undeserved reward as a free gift (grace), I have no room for boasting. This is what Abraham discovered in the matter of justification.

David also spoke of this idea, though the details of the gospel were never disclosed to him or to Abraham. David spoke of the blessedness of the man “whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” Ps. 32:1-2 quoted in Rom. 4:8. Is this license to commit evil with impunity? Not

at all. Because of Christ's atonement, man's sins are not counted against him. They are forgiven in Christ. David recognized that God's forgiveness was true and complete, although David did not have the full revelation of the gospel.

This blessedness of which David spoke comes to Jews (the circumcision) and also to the Gentiles (the uncircumcision) alike. In Gen. 15:6 Abraham was declared righteous by faith (his trust in God's promise) before he received the covenant of circumcision. That was given in Gen. 17:9-14. Therefore circumcision had nothing to do with God's declaration of Abraham's righteousness (his justification). However, Abraham's trust (faith) in God had everything to do with God's declaration. Paul shows that the same reasoning applies to the idea of justification by the Law. Abraham lived many years before the giving of the Law. Therefore the Law had nothing to do with his justification.

Abraham's faith is further exemplified in his unwavering confidence that God would perform his promise that Abraham and Sarah would have an heir, even though Sarah was past her child-bearing years and Abraham himself was almost 100 years old. His faith led him to obey God, not as a matter of seeking justification in this obedience, but as a manifestation of his absolute trust and devotion to God. Rom. 4:22-25

IV. Freedom vs. Bondage: Grace and Life in the Spirit. 5:1 – 8:39.

5:1-11. There is great practical value in what Paul has been saying. If I am seeking justification (forgiveness) through trusting in my own good life of strict obedience I will always be frustrated, and live in some degree of doubt and fear. Why? Because I would never know for sure whether or not I had done all I needed to do to be justified. Conversely however, if my trust (faith) is in the atonement of Christ I am always confident of my relationship to God, for my confidence relies not on my own goodness, but on Christ's perfect sacrifice. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith (trust), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand." Rom. 5:1-2. Therefore we have joy even in our suffering. At the very time we were powerless – sinners – God demonstrated his love for us by sending Christ to die for us, truly reconciling man to God.

5:12-21. In these verses, Paul discusses the similarities and differences between Adam and Christ. In the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden, Adam introduced sin into the world. Ever since that event all men have sinned and suffered death. Through one man's sin all mankind suffered. However, through one man's act of righteousness, atonement for sin came to all men. This passage does not teach inherited (original) sin (that we are all guilty of the sin of Adam); rather it teaches inherited consequences of sin. There is a difference between the guilt of sin and the consequences of sin. The language demands that the same quality be placed on the condemned as on the redeemed. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the *many were made sinners*, so also through the obedience of the one man the *many will be made righteous*" Rom. 5:19. The meaning of the passage is that as Adam introduced condemnation through his sin, Jesus Christ introduced justification through his atonement. To benefit from the atonement we must accept it in faith and obedience.

6:1-14. Paul anticipates one difficulty, and answers it by creating a diatribe; “If grace is so abundant and desirable, and such a great manifestation of God’s goodness, wouldn’t it follow logically that the more we sin the greater God’s grace will be known to the world.” Rom. 6:1-2.

Paul’s answer is that such an argument is faulty on two counts. First, when you became Christians you “died to sin.” Second, we were baptized into Christ’s death, buried with him, and raised to walk in newness of life. We put off our old selves (fleshly nature) and put on our new selves (spiritually reborn) in Christ. Sin is slavery, and we have been freed from that slavery. At this point Paul deals with the newborn nature of the Christian. Christians are not simply forgiven sinners; they are new persons – reborn persons. This being true, we must not present our bodies as servants of a master other than Christ, for in doing so we would become instruments of wickedness, and would be living lives totally inconsistent with our new relationship with God.

6:15-23. In these verses Paul addresses what it really means to be a slave of sin or a slave to righteousness. He states that we become the slaves of the one whom we obey as slaves. Being justified through Christ’s atonement means we are to be the slaves of Christ – slaves of righteousness. But if we live lives of obedience to sin we become slaves of sin, in spite of our claim to justification or freedom. When we were slaves of sin we were free from the control of righteousness. Death, separation from God, is the destiny of those who remain slaves of sin even though they claim justification in Christ. On the other hand, in Christ we have been set free from slavery to sin so that we may claim a new master, Jesus Christ. The benefits we reap are holiness and eternal life. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 6:23.

7:1-6. In these verses Paul helps Jewish Christians understand their new role by using the Law as a reference point to illustrate the idea of obligation to obey a master. By using the Law he accomplishes two things. First, he illustrates the principle that a law exercises authority over a person throughout his lifetime. Second, he uses the death of a husband to illustrate the fact that the law’s authority over a person ends at his death. Therefore since Christians have died with Christ they are now dead to the Law and it no longer has dominion over them. There can be little doubt that Paul is speaking of the Law of Moses.

Through this, Paul teaches an important truth, *i.e.* being dead to the Law we are now alive unto Christ, and free to bring forth fruit unto God. Since we are dead to the Law, its power to condemn us to death has ceased – we have been released from its bondage and we are free. “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.” Rom. 7:6.

7:7-25. In this section Paul addresses another argument regarding the Law – that it seems like we would have been better off without the Law since a nonexistent law can’t be broken and thus without law there can be no sin. Paul discusses this issue by asking the readers to look at a realistic situation. He would not have known that coveting was wrong except that the Law said, “Do not covet.” When he saw that coveting was “against the law” he found himself very consciously and constantly doing the very thing the Law forbade. The existence of the Law did not create coveting in him, but pointed it out as sinful. So, without the existence of Law there was

no consciousness of violation, but when the law came into play it pointed out his sin, and destroyed him. There's nothing wrong with the law. The fault is with him. The law is good, but he is a violator. The law really showed sin to be exceedingly evil bringing death and destruction, not because of a fault in the law, but because of fault in the violator.

Because of the relationship of law, sin, and death, Paul says that his whole life became an actual battleground. The law is spiritual, and he is not. He doesn't understand why he does things which he actually hates, and does not do things which he knows he should do. He is constantly fighting this war, and there seems to be no end. In a sense, sin dominates him. It really isn't his reborn self that wants to do this, but his sinful self. In this scenario Paul shows that temptation and sin continue to be problems even for the reborn Christian and he still has to battle Satan at every turn. His reborn self delights in God's law because he knows God has designed it for his good. Yet, when he wants to do good, he finds that evil is right there raising its ugly head. He is wretched in these circumstances. Who can get him out of this terrible conflict? The answer is "Jesus Christ." The answer goes back to the principles already established; the person who has been reborn is a slave of God. The sinful self is a slave of sin. Paul says unfortunately there are times when he allows the old master to dominate his behavior, and when he allows this, it is evident that sin is still present. The conquest is not complete. He still has to face the battle.

8:1-17. Paul concludes that the doctrine of sin, condemnation, and death is no longer applicable. Why? Because through the atonement, the cycle has been broken and we are free from sin. This freedom was not brought about by law, but by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law. Therefore, we must live in accordance with the higher spiritual desires, not in the hostility of rebellion against God.

God's own Spirit dwells in us for the very purpose of empowering us to live in accordance with his will. He gives us life. So we have an obligation, not to live under the domination of our fleshly desires (our sinful self), but to be spiritual. Fear is replaced with confidence, and we can come to God as our Father, because we are his children loved by him.

8:18-39. Paul concludes this section by stating that even the persecution and sufferings which one might have endured for Christ sake do not constitute a sufficient price for the glory which shall be when the whole creation participates in its final liberation. As we eagerly await our final adoption as sons of God, the heavenly Father blesses us with the intercession of the Spirit in life and prayer. God knows the mind of the Spirit who intercedes for us.

So, in God's grand sovereignty over all things he has called each of us to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, providentially working in our own personal history for our ultimate good. He has blessed us with his calling and justification from our sins, and he will finally glorify us with him.

What more then can we say? God is on our side; or better stated, we are on God's side. We are not isolated or forgotten. God has taken this great initiative in our redemption. It did not originate with us, but with him. He is constantly aware of our needs, and takes every measure to fulfill our needs. No power in heaven, on earth, or in hell can separate us from his love. In him and through him we are more than conquerors.

V. Israel and God's Sovereignty. 9:1—11:36.

In this section Paul addresses the reasons for Israel's rejection of Christ. Previous statements show a marvelous unfolding of God's great gifts. This wonderful act on God's part is beyond our power to comprehend. Why then did the Israelites reject Christ and this incredible salvation? The answer is that God has worked through the history of Israel and other nations in order to bring about his own purposes but the Israelites misunderstood much of what God did with their nation. This is seen in at least three ways. First, the Jews did not understand just how their nation fit into God's purposes. Second, they did not understand the reason for God's sovereign choices. Third, they did not understand that the promise to Abraham included all people both Jew and Gentile.

9:1-29. Although Paul was the "apostle to the Gentiles," he never forgot his Jewish roots and heritage. He had great love for his kinsmen in the flesh, and great sorrow that they had not accepted Jesus as their promised Messiah. This is clearly seen when we look at how God has blessed Israel as his chosen people. Paul asks his recipients, particularly the Jewish Christians, to see Israel as the people of the covenant, the worshippers at his temple, the recipients of the Law and the heirs of his promises, all of which dramatically demonstrate God's love for Israel. Yet not all who were the fleshly descendants of Jacob are really Israelites. In fact, some of the fleshly descendants of Abraham are not Israelites at all. Ishmael and his descendants are used to illustrate the point. God made a choice saying to Abraham, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." See Rom. 9:7 and Gen. 21:12. Paul shows that fleshly Israel alone does not constitute all of God's people, but there is a "spiritual Israel" as well. So the children of the promise are both Jews and Gentiles who constitute the "Israel of God," and rightful heirs of the promise made to Abraham. In Genesis 12:3 God's promise to Abraham was that in him "*all* people on earth will be blessed," not just his fleshly descendants. See also Gal. 3:26-29.

Paul notes that sovereign choice is God's prerogative. God chose Jacob over Esau although Esau was a fleshly descendant of Abraham and he was Isaac's first born. God has constantly made choices through history for the ultimate purpose of accomplishing his own sovereign will, which was to introduce his Son into the world, and offer salvation to all men through Him.

Although these choices may appear to be arbitrary, to charge God with injustice is indefensible. These choices did not mean salvation to Israel and condemnation to all who were not so chosen. Instead, they were choices God made in order to fulfill his ultimate purpose.

Why then does God hold human beings responsible for their deeds? The answer is that God's choice did not relieve man of personal responsibility and such a charge would be an affront to God's sovereignty. This shows Israel's misunderstanding of God's purpose for their nation. The potter has the power to decide whether the clay will be used to make a beautiful work or a pot for common use. Some Jews seemed to have considered themselves God's "favorite" people as well as God's chosen people, and as such they believed that they should receive preferential treatment.

Rom. 9:25-29. Paul is saying, "Not so." In verses 25-26 he quotes Hos. 2:23 and Hos. 1:10 in which this prophet predicted that the time would come when those who were not called God's

chosen people would be called the people of God. Next Paul points to Is. 1:9 and Is. 10:22-23 concerning the survival of a small number of Israelites who would return from the Exile. He uses this to illustrate his point and to make an application to the salvation of the Jews of his own day. Only a small number (the remnant) would be saved.

9:30-33. Finally Paul says that though the Gentiles originally did not pursue righteousness, yet they found it. On the other hand, the Israelites who pursued it missed it. The Gentiles are practicing faith (trust in Christ's atonement) while the Israelites continue to pursue righteousness through the works of the Law.

10:1-21. The Israelites manifested a zeal for God, but their zeal was not based on knowledge. They had not understood the righteousness of God through faith, but sought to establish their own righteousness. This displayed their misunderstanding of the purpose of the Law and their own mission. In Rom. 10:5-9 Paul uses two statements from Moses. One describes legal righteousness and the other describes faith righteousness. Legal righteousness is described in Lev. 18:5: "The man who does these things will live by them." Faith righteousness is described in Deut. 30:14: "The word is near you: it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming." The contrast which Paul shows is that the statement from Leviticus deals with performance in compliance with law, while the statement from Deuteronomy deals with the word being implanted in one's heart. Paul shows that anyone who confesses Jesus Christ can be saved. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," (Rom. 10:13) whether Jew or Gentile.

Rom. 10:20. Tragically most of Israel did not accept the good news about Christ. One must hear the message to exercise faith. But didn't they hear? Of course they did. But Israel shunned the bidding of God while other nations lent an ear to his message. Paul says that the Gentiles' acceptance is illustrated in Is. 65:1 "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."

11:1-10. Does this mean that God has disowned his people Israel? Paul says, "Of course not, look at me. I am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Elijah at one time thought he was the only faithful one in Israel. God reminded him that there were seven thousand who had not forsaken Him. Now, Paul says there is a small group among fleshly Israel which has turned to Christ. Israel sought God's approval but did not obtain it because they had misunderstood God's purpose for Israel in the grand design. They were obstinate and became hardened as Paul illustrates from a group of Old Testament quotations.

11:11-24. Israel is not beyond the mercy of God, but through their rejection of the gospel, Christ has been preached to the Gentiles, making Israel envious. Paul speaks particularly to the Gentiles to keep them from becoming arrogant. He quotes Num. 15:17-21 for the image of the first fruits being offered to God. He concludes that if the first fruits are holy (belonging to God), so also the remainder of the harvest is holy, because it comes from the same source. Just as the root is holy, so also are the fruits which come from the root. The root represents the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to whom the promise and covenant were originally given. Israel made up the natural branches coming from this root and the Gentiles were the branches grafted in later. Israelites, the natural branches, were cut off because of their unbelief. The Gentiles

need to remember that they are the “wild olive shoots” and the root supports them, so they should not be arrogant saying, “Branches were broken off so I could be grafted in.” Just as God grafted the Gentiles into the root, so he can graft Israel back into the root. Don’t be condescending, be afraid. “If God did not spare the natural branches he will not spare you.” Rom. 11:21. In this is demonstrated both the goodness and severity of God.

11:25-32. Paul recognizes that much of what he has said will be difficult for his recipients to understand and accept. He speaks of God eternal plan as a mystery. Unlike the pagan mysteries of his day which were never explained to their worshippers, Paul’s is a mystery of God which is about to be revealed in simplest terms. It is this: God’s plan is to redeem all mankind in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile. This is a common thread which runs through Paul’s writings when he speaks of God’s mystery. In Eph. 3:2-12 he refers to this mystery as God’s eternal purpose in Christ.

Israel, Paul says, has experienced a hardening “in part,” that is, a partial falling away. For a period of time – until the full number of Gentiles has come in – this hardening will continue. Israel (fleshly descendants of Abraham) will be saved in the same manner as the Gentiles – just as Paul has previously described. The Greek words *και ουτως πας Ισραηλ σωθησεται* (*kai outos pas Israel sothesetai*) literally mean “and in this way every Israelite will be saved.” God has not forgotten Israel, but their disobedience has resulted in an opportunity for the Gentile world to hear the gospel. Paul concludes the polemic section of the book by saying that both Jews and Gentiles will be saved in the same way, that is, by the sacrifice of Christ. The Gentiles will have the opportunity to hear the gospel for a time as expressed by the statement, “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” This is an indefinite time, and an indefinite number regarding the Gentiles, and there is no reason for us to speculate concerning it. Nor does Paul’s statement give reason to conclude that there will be a mass conversion of Israel at some time in the future. Paul simply states that the gospel makes no distinction between the salvation of the Jews and the salvation of the Gentiles.

11:33-36. These verses conclude the polemic section with Paul’s doxology. When he reflects on the beauty and expanse of the gospel and God’s mercy in Christ he is overwhelmed with God’s all encompassing and unfathomable love for all mankind. God’s knowledge is beyond our comprehension, and his judgments are beyond our power to trace out. Everything exists through him.

Having concluded the polemic section Paul begins describing the life to be lived by those who have received this justification from God.

VI. A Life of Justification Demands a Life of Godliness. 12:1—15:13.

This section is made up of a variety of exhortations concerning practical issues of the Christian life. Our justification through Christ’s atonement demands a life of godliness.

12:1-8. Based on the doctrine of justification by faith rather than law – grace rather than merit – Paul encourages the Roman Christians to give their bodies to God as living sacrifices, probably contrasting this with the physical sacrifices of dead animals under the Law. Paul notes that

by doing so, they are performing a spiritual service. Conformity to this world is denounced, and the need to renew the mind is annunciated. Verses 3-8 break down this transformation of mind into some of its component parts. As members of the one body, he encourages each one to exercise the gift with which he or she is endowed.

12:9-21. This brief section deals with the supremacy of love in practical situations along with certain other Christian characteristics. Love gives rise to a sympathetic understanding of the plight of others, helps us refrain from retaliation, and enables us to return good for evil. God's people do not have the right to retaliate against those who have done evil to them. God alone has the right to avenge.

13:1-7. Having spoken of God's prerogative in dealing with life's injustices, and the sins which people commit against each other, Paul now turns to the function of civil government particularly as it relates to these injustices. One of the functions of government is to punish evil doers. Civil governments are ordained by God to perform a variety of services. Civil authorities are to be respected, for God has ordained their existence. Paul does not advocate or defend any particular type or form of government. Instead, the principle of governments being established among men is what is being advocated here. Certainly this is not to say that civil governments have license to do as they please nor does this condone abuses of civil powers, *e.g.* the abuses of the Roman Empire. These "powers that be" are God's servants for wrath against the evil doers. Governments have the right (responsibility) to bear the sword, give civil order to society, and to reward loyalty. Therefore Christians are to pay taxes and other revenues for the support of these governments.

13:8-14. Once again Paul addresses the practical conduct of love by stating that it is the fulfillment of the law. Furthermore, we must rid ourselves of a variety of sinful ways.

14:1—15:13. This is the longest passage in the entire Bible concerning the Christian's responsibility to a weaker brother. The writer begins this section by stating a fundamental principle: "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters" Rom. 14:1. To illustrate the point he uses two examples. (1) Some eat only vegetables while others eat both meats and vegetables. This was a matter of conscience for the vegetarians, and probably stemmed in part from Jewish customs and Old Testament laws concerning clean and unclean meats. (2) Some considered one day more sacred than another, while others considered every day the same. Probably this arose from the Jews continued observance of the Sabbath day as prescribed by the Law. There are two basic conclusions which Paul draws from this: (1) Christians are not to judge (condemn) those who differ with them regarding such disputable matters, and (2) each person should be convinced in his own mind concerning such things, and therefore should not violate his conscience regarding them. He is to act out of conviction (faith). The welfare of others must always be a consideration in one's own conduct, so that the stronger person does not become an obstacle in the path of the weaker person. The behavior described in these verses is the demand of love.

Love requires that the strong should bear gently with the failings of the weak, just as Christ did. Therefore we should accept one another in the spirit of love.

VII. Closing Remarks. 15:14—16:27.

15:14-33. In these verses, Paul gives personal exhortations to his recipients based on his own ministry to the Gentiles, and declares his intent to visit them when he goes to Spain. However, he notes that he must first deliver the contribution of the Macedonian churches for relief of the poor saints in Jerusalem.

16:1-16. In these verses Paul sends personal greetings to many people in the church in Rome, and mentions his past relationship with some of them. He calls attention to the fact that Andronicus and Junias in Rome were his relatives (or fellow countrymen), and became Christians prior to his own conversion. We know nothing more about them. It is obvious from this section that Paul was well acquainted with many in Rome. Just how this came about is unknown.

16:17-27. These verses conclude with exhortations and a final doxology.

Chapter IV

The Theme of Romans

Rom. 1:1-17

Salutation: 1:1-7

This salutation, verses 1-7, is unique especially in comparison to Paul's other letters. It is deeply theological and lengthy, consisting of just one long sentence in the Greek text. He introduces some very important theological concepts which are to be developed through the course of the epistle. Four things are prominent. (1) There is his emphasis on the role of the apostles as they follow in the footsteps of the Old Testament prophets. (2) The call of the gospel to the Gentiles. (3) The declaration of the divinity of Christ as seen in the resurrection. (4) The linkage of the resurrection, God's grace, man's faith, and man's obedience. Much of what he will say in this epistle is based on Old Testament statements.

Commentary

Verse 1. Paul generally uses a standard epistolary form of introduction but in Romans it is extended considerably to cover seven verses rather than just one or two verses. With the exception of Romans his familiar "grace and peace" expression comes early but here it is not seen until verse 7. Galatians is his only other letter to vary from his familiar form of greeting. In addition, this is Paul's only letter to include a Christological statement in his salutation. In verses 3-4 he makes the statement that Christ's humanity is affirmed as a descendant of David and his divinity is declared by the resurrection. In this Paul simply affirms the doctrine of the incarnation without explanation. Compare Phil. 2:5-11. There is no mention of another person who joins in the writing. In some of his other letters he was joined by Timothy and/or Silas.

The first thing Paul claims is that he is a "servant of Jesus Christ." He uses the Greek word **δουλος** (*doulos*) which generally refers to a slave. Later Paul will use this word to describe the person who is a slave of sin. Jesus also used the word when in Jn. 8:34 referring to the same idea. The LXX frequently refers to God's "servants, the prophets." See Amos 3:7, Jer. 7:25, Ezra 9:11. By using the word **δουλος** (*doulos*) Paul is indirectly showing himself to be opposite of the **κυριος** (*kurios*), Lord, owner, or master. The implication is that he (Paul) is the slave who belongs to the **κυριος**, the owner *i.e.* Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, Paul says he was "called to be an apostle." Some have claimed that this indicates that he was "called an apostle," that is, some contemporaries referred to him as an apostle, but without authorization. However the thrust of the introduction along with other statements in the epistle emphasize his divine appointment to the apostleship. He was called to become an apostle by the sovereign act of the Lord in the vision on the Damascus Road. In Rom. 11:13 he refers to himself as "the apostle to the Gentiles." In Gal. 1:1 where he specifically said he was an apostle not from men or by men but by Christ. The word **αποστολος** (*apostolos*) is a compound word consisting of **απο** (*apo*), meaning "away from" and **στελλω** (*stellō*) meaning "to send." The compound word means "one who is sent forth, one who is sent on a mission, an agent or one who is authorized to carry a message." It was not an ecclesiastical word but was used frequently among

the Greeks when referring to a diplomat, a legate, or a messenger. During the lifetime of Jesus he referred to the twelve as apostles. By the time the various books of the New Testament were being written the word had taken a technical (ecclesiastical) meaning referring to a special group of men who had been commissioned by the Lord as the “earthen vessels” or depositories of the gospel message. See Acts 1 where Jesus commissions them and briefly explains their mission and responsibility. In the New Testament the word is used in a broad sense referring to such men as Barnabas, Silas, possibly James, the Lord’s brother and others. See Gal. 1:19 and Acts 14:4, 14. In Heb. 3:1 Jesus is referred to as an apostle. Paul links his apostleship to the fact that he was “set apart for the gospel of God.” For a discussion of the meaning of the word “gospel” see Chapter II. The gospel is sometime spoken of as coming from God and sometimes from Christ.

Verse 2. The gospel was **προεπηγγειλατο** (*proepēggeilato*) “promised beforehand.” This is a compound word made up of the preposition **προ** (*pro*) meaning “in advance, prior to or beforehand” and **επαγγέλλομαι** (*epaggelomai*) meaning “to make a promise or an offer.” Paul says that the gospel was promised beforehand through the prophets in “the Holy Scriptures. The exact nature of this promise was not described by the Old Testament prophets but many of them testified of the coming of a new era. Paul does not elaborate on his statement about the Old Testament testimony concerning the coming of Christ. The gospel was the good news of that era which, as Paul will show, was fulfilled in God’s gracious initiative in the atonement. In the first century B.C. there were various speculations about the coming of the Messiah but there was no consensus in Israel concerning this. With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly *The Manual of Discipline*, some light was shed on the nature of the Messianic expectation among the Essenes. However, none of the Jews, either then or now, considered a suffering and dying Messiah as described in Is. 53. During the Intertestamental Period a few of the Psalms came to be considered Messianic but we have relatively little information concerning the nature of this expectation. In the Psalms of Solomon, a pseudepigraphic work composed probably between 70 B.C. and 40 B.C., part of the second Psalm is used by the author. The author beseeches the Lord to send his ruler. “Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the son of David, at the time known to you, O God, in order that he may reign over Israel your servant. . . . With a rod of iron he shall shatter all their substance; he shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth. At his rebuke nations shall flee before him, and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart.” (Psalms of Solomon 17:21-26)

Verses 3-4. These verses have a brief Christological statement in which Paul affirms the dual nature of Christ – he was both human and divine – and in this way Paul emphasizes the doctrine of the incarnation. Although Paul does not develop or defend this doctrine it will become an important foundation stone as he develops the doctrine of God’s grace and man’s inability to find justification through meritorious works. He affirms Jesus’ fleshly descent from David and makes the statement that the resurrection is a declaration that Christ is the Son of God. Jesus himself made very little use of the phrase yet it cannot be denied that he affirmed this relationship with God both directly and indirectly. See Matt. 16:16-17 where Jesus blessed Peter for his confession and Matt. 27:43 where others claimed to have heard Jesus make this claim. Also see Mk. 14:61. We should notice that Paul’s declaration is not a statement that Jesus “became the son of God” at the resurrection but that this event was a declaration of the truth of his divinity. This was the final and climactic event which showed that Jesus’ claims for himself were valid.

Verses 5-7. There are numbers of important words and thoughts in these verses. For the first time in the letter Paul introduces three of his favorite words “grace, faith, and obedience.” Much of the polemic of this epistle will reflect the importance of these words and their linkage to each other. As a secular word, **χάρις** (*charis*) – “grace” – was used to refer to an object or something else external. It was usually thought of as “sweetness, beauty, or attractiveness.” When used to refer to one’s own benefit it was thought of as “favor or good will” particularly referring to that which was unearned. Barclay expresses Paul’s application of this word in the following way: “In his pre-Christian days Paul had sought to earn glory in the eyes of men, and merit in the sight of God, by meritorious observance of the works of the law, and he had found no peace that way. Now he knew that what mattered was not what he could do, but what God had done. It has been put this way, ‘The law lays down what man must do; the gospel lays down what God has done.’” (William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, second edition, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p.3.)

In verse 5 Paul links faith, grace and obedience. He always saw obedience to God as the manifestation of one’s faith. Throughout this epistle he will emphasize this. Paul cannot imagine a person who claims to belong to Christ failing to obey the demands of the Lord. He shows that the Christian’s obedience is to be motivated, not primarily from a sense of obligation, but from the overwhelming gratitude. In Paul’s case this realization was experienced when he came face to face with his own sinful state, the impossibility of solving this problem himself, and the unspeakable and unmerited gift of Christ in the atonement.

In verse 7 he refers to his addressees as “saints,” the most frequently used word in the New Testament to designate the followers of Christ. The word **ἅγιοις** (*hagiois*) translated “saints” is used frequently in the LXX to describe God or God’s intention for his people. Its basic meaning is “separation” and when applied to God and God’s people it refers to devotion or “set apart” for the service of God. The sacrifices of the Law were to be characterized by this. An animal which was to be offered on the altar was to be without blemish. With the animal this would be from a physical inspection but with mankind it was to be a spiritual matter. As the essence of God’s character is separation from all evil, so also the essence of his people is to be the same. “You shall be holy for I am holy,” Lev. 11:45. In addressing them as **ἅγιοις** (*hagiois*) he is not speaking of their attainment but of their call to be set apart. He refers to the Corinthians as saints, but the I Corinthian letter indicates their behavior was not always “holy.”

Having introduced himself and expressed a brief part of the theme of his writing (verses 1-6), he comes to the conclusion of his epistolary introduction with the characteristic statement, “grace and peace to you.”

Paul’s Personal Longings: 1:8-15

Paul had no part in founding the Roman church. So far as we know, he had never been to Rome yet he had many friends there. He begins this block, 1:8-15, by stating his gratitude for the saints in Rome and their worldwide influence. Perhaps this indicates that the church in Rome was much larger than the average congregation in Paul’s experience. Most churches in the very early days were small enough to meet in private homes. Paul constantly remembers the Roman Christians in his prayers, calling God as witness to his deep desire to visit the imperial city and its

church. He wants to impart some spiritual gift to them and likewise receive such a gift from them as they encourage each other. His plans to come had been thwarted but he does not give the circumstances which prevented his visit. He hoped to reap a harvest among them as he had experienced in other Gentile churches.

Commentary

Verses 8-9. He begins this block by expressing his thanks to them for their vibrant faith and its influence in the world. Here he uses the word “faith” as a synonym for their Christian life. We should always look for the object of faith as we encounter this word rather than simply attaching a propositional – “I believe in Jesus Christ” – meaning to it. Paul usually, though not always, uses **πιστις** (*pistis*) to mean trust. The word therefore almost always is speaking of trusting in Christ and his atoning sacrifice.

God is called in as witness to the truthfulness of Paul’s next statement. He speaks of “the God whom I serve.” The word **λατρεω** (*latreuō*) is translated “I serve.” It had an early history of use in a secular way referring “to serve for hire.” However in New Testament times (the koiné Greek period) it almost always had a religious meaning, *i.e.* to render a religious service to God or to a pagan god. See Rom. 1:25. It is sometimes translated “spiritual act of worship” or “spiritual service” (Rom. 12:1 NIV and NASV) usually carrying the idea of service in life. In Heb. 8:5 and 9:9 the writer uses this word to refer to the High Priest offering sacrifice. The word commonly translated “to worship” is **προσκυνεω** (*proskuneō*), which refers to worship as “giving homage to or giving adoration to.”

Verses 11-12. Paul’s desire is to visit them in the near future. He uses the phrase **ἤδη ποτε** (*ēdē pote*) which is difficult to express in a word. It conveys the idea that he has waited a long time for such an opportunity but he finally expects that the time will come soon. He says that his intense desire to see them is that he might impart some spiritual gift. The exact meaning of this spiritual gift and the implications of the statement are open to some questions. Some commentators strongly believe that Paul is speaking of the impartation of miraculous gifts of the Spirit as described in I Cor. 12-14. To some extent Paul explains his objective in verse 12 saying, “that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.” Some commentators believe that after Paul had written of his desire to impart a spiritual gift some of his recipients may misunderstand this to mean that Paul is expressing his own spiritual superiority. In order to clarify this he explains that he wants to receive from them the same kind of edification he wishes to impart. Richard Batey expresses this view: “Paul implies that there is a deficiency in the church at Rome which he could help to remedy. Then he realizes the implication of his comment and quickly seeks to correct any misunderstanding by pointing out that he also would be enriched by the association.” (Richard Batey, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: The Living Word Commentary*, Everett Ferguson, editor, (Austin, Texas: R.B., Sweet Co., 1969), p 22.) However, this seems too artificial for the apostle. His simple explanation is best understood as just that, a simple explanation. He may have also intended to impart to them various miraculous gifts as he had apparently done in Corinth but the passage does not necessitate that interpretation.

In verses 13-14 he tells them that he also desires to have a harvest among the Romans as he has experienced among other Gentiles. In all of this Paul states his sense of obligation to take the

message of the gospel to both Jews and Greeks, to the wise and to the foolish. This tells us of the Gentile character of the Roman church and his true reason for wanting to go to Rome.

In verse 14 we have the Greek word βαρβαρος (*barbaros*) which generally refers to a non-Greek individual, considered by the Greeks to be a barbarian. However, the word is not a vulgar as it might sound at first. Basically it referred to a foreigner, a person whose native language was not Greek, or a person of strange language. It is used in I Cor. 14:11 referring to those who did not speak the Greek language. When referring to the wise and the foolish he probably had in mind the philosophical minded people compared to those who were not so sophisticated in their education as in I Cor. 1-2. In Paul's other writings we see that his primary motivation to preach the gospel was not because of an obligation but because of his overwhelming gratitude for what Christ had done on the cross. This does not diminish the responsibility for him to preach but raises it to a higher level. Having established this deep longing, he applies it to his plan to go to Rome. He uses the word "gospel" ten times in the book. This, already, is his third time to use of the word. See Chapter II for a discussion of "gospel."

The Righteousness of God by Faith: 1:16-17

In these two verses Paul states the thesis of the epistle. The words are simple but the meaning behind the words is profound. Probably the first thing we need to remember is that in the gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness. Throughout the epistles Paul will show a different concept of God's righteousness than had been seen before. He is not speaking of the justice, ethics, or goodness of a righteous life or a righteous God. Instead, he will show how God's righteousness flows from God himself to those who respond in faith. This is God's way of creating truly righteous people. However, their righteousness is not because of their own high ethical-moral character or even the accomplishments of a godly life. This "righteousness of God" is his gift to those who respond to him in full faith (trust), for that is the vehicle which brings them into the grace perfected on the cross.

Commentary

Verse 16. Paul builds his thesis on what he had just stated in verse 15 – he is eager to preach the gospel to all people. It is interesting that this letter was written from Corinth. Corinth was the church to which he later wrote that "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." (I Cor. 1:18) There were all kinds of "reasons" for the early Christians to be ashamed or embarrassed by the gospel. It had its origin in the midst of the most unlikely circumstances. Its leader was from a small insignificant country and from a nation whose people were hated almost everywhere they lived. William Sanday refers to a statement made by John Chrysostom, who lived in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. As a Christian preacher his eloquence earned him the title of "the golden voice." He began a sermon by speaking of the One who "passed for the son of a carpenter, brought up in Judea, in the house of a poor woman . . . and who died like a criminal in the company of robbers." (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 22.) None of this sounds like an appropriate origin for God's intervention into human history but Paul shows that it was in Christ's humility and rejection that the atonement emerged.

In spite of the foolishness of the gospel, Christ's rejection by the Jewish community, and the

gospel's failure to attract the sophisticated philosophers of Athens and Corinth, Paul says it is the power of God to save. In verse 16 the word **δυναμις** (*dunamis*) is translated power. This is a strong word, frequently used to refer to superhuman power or divine power. Another word, **ἐνέργεια** (*energeia*) is sometimes translated power, but its emphasis is energy and operation. The Greeks had at least seven words which pertained to some phase of power. Some of these referred to the signs, miracles, and mighty works of Christ while others referred to the wonders around us. The word **δυναμις** (*dunamis*) is much stronger than those words. It can be translated "force" when speaking of something like the forces of nature. The fact that Paul used this word to express the character of the gospel message shows the intensity and power of sin. The enormous strength and penalty of sin required the strongest possible power to solve its guilt and dominance. Paul will show that this power is God's gift of Christ in the atonement.

Another important word used here is **σωτηριαν** (*sōtērian*), translated "salvation." In the Old Testament the primary idea of salvation was deliverance from one's enemies, whether national or personal. In later Judaism it was viewed as having a Messianic involvement although specific Old Testament references to the Messiah are very few. The expectation of eternal life with God was not a prominent part of Old Testament. Some references are found which indicate such a hope but these are few in number, *e.g.* David at the death of his child (II Sam. 12:18-23) and the statement in Eccl. 12:1-8. However, the Pharisees and others during portions of the Intertestamental Period and in New Testament times believed in immortality, spirits, angels, life after death, etc. Prior to the coming of Christ and the message of the gospel very little is said about eternal salvation or immortality. Paul told Timothy that the gospel "brought life and immortality to light," II Tim. 1:10. Biblical salvation is not the assurance of a successful career or freedom from pain and illness. It is not the guarantee of self-esteem or protection from danger. It is simply salvation from sin. It has an eschatological dimension, the hope (secure expectation) of eternal life with God. We must remember that Christ did not die so men could have self-esteem, successful careers, or freedom from pain and disease. All of this could have been accomplished without his death on the cross. Christ was rejected, discouraged, and finally tortured to death. Why should we expect better treatment than he experienced? "Everyone who wants to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," II Tim. 3:12. (See the section on Salvation and the Law in Chapter II.)

In verse 17 Paul uses the word **αποκαλύπτεται** (*apokaluptetai*), translated "is revealed," which is in the present passive tense. This carries linear action meaning that the righteousness of God is "continually revealed" in the gospel. This adds to the importance of the expression "God's righteousness."

At this point Paul introduces the important phrase "the righteousness of God. This will become the foundation of his polemic. Scholars have written many books and articles on the meaning and significance of this expression. It appears to be an inexhaustible topic which, for centuries has captured the minds and attention of some of the world's greatest Christian scholars. The concept of God's righteousness which Paul will develop throughout the epistle is both old and new. It reaches back to the time of Abraham and in that sense it is very old. On the other hand, it is not fully developed until the advent of the gospel and in that sense it is new. The necessity of the death of Christ is one of the areas of God's righteousness which is very difficult for us to grasp. Mankind asks, "How could a righteous God allow such a tragic thing to happen?" Yet,

this is an essential part of the picture. Without it there is no atonement, and therefore no justification. This must be linked to the severity of sin (Rom. 7:13) but also to the hope of salvation. The wrath of God is also part of his righteousness for it is the only righteous (just) reaction to sin's destructive power. There is an important link between the atonement, God's wrath, God's righteousness, and our justification. These concepts are not isolated from each other and we must see this linkage or our own faith will be fragmented. Together, these are manifestations of the righteousness of God.

What is unique in Paul's description of God's righteousness is that it "goes forth" or is poured out on mankind, changing a sinful person into a righteous person. There are two keys to this. First the entire plan is God's initiative. Failure to remember this brings self-righteous – one's dependence on his own goodness as part of the process of justification. It was not at the request or pleading of mankind or because of man's recognition of his own need that God made the first move toward atonement. The second key is that it was never conditioned upon man's accomplishments or man's godliness. In Rom. 3:27-29 Paul asked, "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." Although Paul certainly has the Law of Moses in mind, the absence of the definite article in this passage broadens it to apply to the nature and purpose of any kind of law. Paul also said, "It is not I that live but Christ who lives in me" Gal. 2:20-21. Faith is our only access to this imputed righteousness. That is, our trust in Christ's work on the cross, Rom. 5:1-2.

Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4, "The righteous will live by faith." It is very helpful to look at the original context of Habakkuk. The prophet had a difficult time with God. A part of the explanation from the Lord was, "but the righteous will live by his faith." God made a promise that he would do what was needed, but Habakkuk must trust in the promise of God. This was the key to understanding and accepting God's action. God's works and promises are not like the works and promises of mankind. Basically God said to Habakkuk, "Trust me; I know what I'm doing. You might not understand all about it, but I'll take care of things in my own time and in my own way." Once a man confronts the challenge of this complete trust (faith) he can see the work of God more clearly. However, it is not until this trust is exercised that the gospel can remove him from his endeavors to find justification through his own good life into the security of Christ's atonement. For additional details on this important topic reread the section on "The Law" and also "The Righteousness of God" in Chapter II.

Chapter V

Sin and God's Wrath

Rom. 1:18—3:20

A Brief Overview of Unrighteousness: 1:18—2:29

From verse 18 forward the first chapter deals with the sins of mankind in general, but particularly the pagans, the Gentiles. However, in chapter 2 Paul shows that some Christians were guilty of a variety of similar offenses. The Jews generally considered the Gentiles to be inferior because they were idol worshippers, were not part of the chosen nation, had no place in God's covenant, did not practice circumcision, and did not have the Law of Moses to guide them. Each of these items was important and constituted an advantage to the Jews but these advantages did not earn their justification in God's sight. Since the Jews generally considered themselves above the Gentiles, most commentators apply these verses exclusively to the Christian Jews in Rome. On the other hand, Paul does not address the Jews specifically until verse 17. Some of the thoughts in these verses could apply to Gentile converts who had become arrogant and self-righteous. Certainly there were some such Gentiles in the Roman church.

First he tells his recipients that by condemning the behavior of the Gentiles they were actually condemning themselves. The Jews were practicing many of the same sins which they condemned among the pagans and they displayed a similar manner of life as the pagans. This brings up the question, "If, in God's sight, the Jews are equally guilty as the Gentiles, then what is the advantage of being a Jew?" In this block of text Paul answers that question but he goes on to show that neither Jew nor Gentile is truly righteous. Consequently, both have the same need of the atonement of Christ. With this explanation Paul shows that one of the primary purposes of the Law was to bring the awareness of sin to the forefront of the Jewish mind. Many Jews seemed to have misunderstood this.

The Problem of Sin Among the Pagans: 1:18-32

Verses 18-20. These verses show that it is foolish to reject the existence of God when one sees the manifestations of a Creator. Although Paul does not separate Gentiles from Jews at this point, it is implied that he is speaking of the pagan world because the Jews did not have a problem of polytheism or atheism during the first Christian century. His major premise is that apart from the true God mankind tends to become totally corrupt. As a result of this, God's wrath is manifested against such evil behavior. Strong phrases are used to describe the wrath of God because of the behavior of the Gentiles – "God gave them up," "God gave them over to sinful desires," "God gave them over to shameful lusts," and "God gave them over to a depraved mind."

Commentary

In verse 18 he says that the wrath of God "is being revealed." The wrath of God is as essential to his divine holiness as is the love of God. We have a moral-ethical God whose aversion to sin must be as strongly emphasized as his love of goodness. In Ex. 34:4-7, after the rebellion of Israel in the worship of the golden calf, God declares his dual nature to Moses. He is a God of

mercy and love, but he is also a God who punishes sin. Both of these characteristics declare his holiness. The Greek word **αποκαλύπτεται** (*apokaluptetai*) used in this verse is translated “revealed.” It is a present indicative passive form which carries linear action showing that the wrath of God is continual. Not only is Paul speaking of God’s wrath in the final judgment but he also refers to his ongoing wrath of God as he sees the evil behavior of mankind. This is frequently stated in the Old Testament. Evil behavior has consequences in life, but Paul will show in the following chapter that the ultimate destruction of such evil will come at the final judgment. See Rom. 2:5, 8. Later he will use this unrighteous behavior to show the desperate condition of mankind and our absolute need for the righteousness of God to be imparted to us. Although Paul does not develop this principle at this point, he will later show that this is the fundamental reason that the gospel is necessary. In 10:3 he will contrast man’s attempt at righteousness with God’s imputed righteousness. See also Phil. 3:9 where he affirms the same need. Paul shows the gospel to be in opposition to God’s wrath; that is, the gospel is the solution.

Verses 19-20 have become controversial. Does Paul refer to “knowing God” or “having knowledge of God?” Does verse 19 mean “that which *can be known* about God” or does it mean “that which *is known* about God?” Paul uses the word **εν** (*en*) which properly means “within or among.” He is saying that God has made known to all mankind (“among them”) his power and his invisible qualities. These are made known through his creation. Psalms 19:1 expresses this as a declaration of God’s power and his glory. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” This is not a statement that we can know God’s will by observing the created universe, but that within every man is the capacity to conclude that God is a powerful Creator. Paul is dealing with the fact of God’s existence not with the revelation of his will for mankind. He says that the qualities of power and God’s divine nature are clearly seen through what has been made. Therefore there is a sense in which mankind can “know God” through seeing his creation, but in I Corinthians he says that human wisdom is not sufficient to overcome sin, man’s fundamental problem. That only comes through the gospel. See I Cor. 1:21.

Paul has used two important words in verses 17 and 19. In verse 17 he speaks of God’s righteousness being “revealed” in the gospel. Here he uses the word **αποκαλύπτω** (*apokaluptō*) which means to reveal that which has not been previously known and this is precisely what is contained in the gospel. When he speaks of the pagan “knowledge of God” as in verse 19 he uses the word **φανηροω** (*phanēroō*) which means “to make clear or set in clear light.” It can also mean “to declare or to disclose.” In this Paul says that one may come to an awareness of God through reflection on “what is made.” This word is used only once in the LXX, and is seldom used by Jewish writers such as Josephus and Philo. On the other hand it occurs twenty times in John and twenty-two times in the writings of Paul. We can therefore say it is really a New Testament word. These two words have different emphasis. The word **αποκαλύπτω** (*apokaluptō*) emphasizes the idea of revealing something, but **φανηροω** (*phanēroō*) emphasizes the idea to clarify or to disclose. The former is used when speaking of revelation but the latter is used to clarify or make something evident.

At this point Paul introduces a whole catalogue of vices which were characteristic of the Gentiles. Similar lists are found elsewhere in his writings and in the Old Testament as well. Some of the Greek philosophers used such lists in their moral-ethical teaching.

Verses 21-23 are an indictment against the Gentiles who had this knowledge among them but refused to glorify God. Instead, they became ungrateful and their senseless hearts were darkened. They claimed wisdom but acted foolishly. Instead of worshipping the Creator, they turned to their own created images of men, birds, animals, and reptiles. In verse 28 Paul will tell us that these people did not think it worthwhile to have God in their knowledge.

Verses 24-32 give more specific statements of their evil and tell us of God's action against them. In each of three separate categories we have the statement that "God gave them over." Each of these statements progressively describes the conditions in a more vivid way. These are some of the most severe warnings in the New Testament and they constitute the reasons for the moral depravity of the Gentiles. Their immoral behavior was traced to their idolatry. This is seen by the use of the word "Therefore" in the beginning of verse 24. Later in verse 26 he uses the phrase "Because of this" and in verse 28 he says "Furthermore." The practice of idolatry in Mesopotamian and the Roman Empire frequently involved grossly immoral sexual activity, drunkenness, and other forms of depravity. Paul has shown that what we generally refer to as the cosmological argument for the existence of God – a thing made necessitates a maker – is not to be overlooked. This is akin to the theory of "intelligent design."

Paul is dealing with sin and guilt. However, in the Jewish mind there was probably a conflict here. To the Jews, the source of knowledge about right and wrong was the Law of Moses. Those who broke this Law were guilty. Since the Gentiles did not have the Law the question arises, "Can they be held guilty?" To the Jews a partial answer to this was the fact that the Gentiles were not part of God's covenant, so they were basically a worthless bunch. Paul explains in 1:18-32 that this is not correct reasoning. Their idolatry is the cause of their depravity, not the fact that they were not under the Law of Moses. In 2:25-27 Paul will show that the Gentiles are responsible to God for the knowledge supplied to them and they will be judged accordingly. The key to understanding the depravity of the Gentiles is, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks" (1:21). On the other hand, possession of the Law of Moses was not the basis of God's relationship to the Jews. Instead they had to shoulder even greater responsibility since they had the oracles of God (3:1-2). But what does this have to do with the sins of the Gentiles described in verses 21-32? Much of this lays a foundation on which he will build in chapters 2-4.

Verses 24-25. He begins by saying, "God gave them over." He has already stated that they refused to have God in their knowledge when they turned to idolatry. Their rejection of God is the reason "God gave them over." Sexual impurity and debauchery were characteristic of paganism and Paul specifically attacks these abuses. In these verses he introduces the topic in a rather broad sense saying that God gave them over "in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served the created things rather than the Creator." The regulation of sexual behavior was a significant part of the Law of Moses. It should be noted that the Law did not "create" a concept of morality and immorality but it identified immoral behavior as sin rather than seeing it as socially or culturally unacceptable behavior. See Lev. 18 where a lengthy description and definition of unacceptable sexual behavior is given.

In the Greco-Roman world a wide variety of sexual perversions, such as homosexuality, was

quite common, although those following this lifestyle were in the minority. Their society and culture did not consider this behavior harmful, bizarre, or illicit. Paul will describe this in more detail in verses 26-27. Since he wrote Romans from Corinth some commentators believe that the immorality of that city prompted him to write about homosexuality. However Joseph Fitzmyer says that the Corinth of Paul's day was not characterized by homosexuality but rather by prostitution. The previous city of Corinth, destroyed in 146 B.C. was more closely associated with homosexuality than the city which Paul visited. (Joseph Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275.)

Why did Paul address this topic? First, the prevalence of homosexuality in the Greco-Roman world certainly inspired him to expose it as one of the sexual perversions of his day. Second, he saw this and other sins as the outgrowth of idolatry and the fact that the pagans professed themselves to be wise but "they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for the images of men, beasts, and birds, worshipping and serving the things created rather than the Creator. Fitzmyer says:

The human being who fails to acknowledge God and turns from him who is the source of life and immortality, seeks rather a vicarious expression of it through the misuse of the natural procreative faculty. This faculty thus becomes part of frustrated creation, of which Paul will write in 8:22, part of the normal groaning of the universe. Homosexual behavior is the sign of human rebellion against God, an outward manifestation of the inward and spiritual rebellion.

(Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 276.)

Verses 26-27. Paul describes these sexual perversions in more detail. In verse 26 he does not use the word *ἐπιθυμία* (*epithumia*) "desire," generally translated "lust," when speaking of an evil desire. Instead he uses a much stronger expression, *παθὴ ἀτιμίας* (*pathē atimias*) which literally means "passions of dishonor or vile passions of disgrace." This phrase is the strongest denunciation of homosexuality in the entire New Testament. It is usually translated in ways to emphasize this strength – "vile affections" (KJV), "vile passions" (ASV), "dishonorable passions" (RSV), and "degrading passions," (NASV, NRSV). Unfortunately the NIV softens the intensity of the phrase by translating it "shameful lusts" which does not express the force of the Greek text. It should be recognized that verse 26 is addressed to sexual perversion by women. John Murray summarizes Paul's meaning in this way: "The implication is that however grievous is fornication or adultery, the desecration involved in homosexuality is on a lower plane of degeneracy; it is unnatural and therefore evinces a perversion more basic." (John Murray, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Romans*, F.F. Bruce, general editor, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 47.)

His contrast between men and women emphasizes the severity of this perversion. He contrasts the "natural function or relation" with women, *φυσικὴν χρῆσιν* (*phusikēn chrēsin*), with that which is *παρα φύσιν* (*para phasin*) "against nature." Paul shows that such sexual perversion is both unnatural and sinful. In contemporary culture these distinctions are strongly ignored and those who oppose homosexuality on Biblical grounds are frequently considered bigots. There can be little doubt that the early Christians experienced similar accusations since the society of that day accepted homosexuality without questioning it on moral grounds. Commentators who

support homosexual conduct contend that Paul was simply expressing the stereotypes of his day and that he was one of those who opposed same-sex relationships. However, Paul and other Biblical writers referred to customs and practices of their contemporaries, but this does not indicate that their instructions were based simply on the conventions of their day contrasted with the writer's own opinions of right and wrong. We must remember that the Bible is God's word, not simply the expressions of the views or opinions of the various writers. Leander R. Keck is characteristic of commentators who attempt to defend same-gender sexual relationships in spite of Paul's strong statements against such conduct. (Leander E. Keck, *Abingdon New Testament Commentaries: Romans*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), pp. 66-73.) Keck goes to great lengths in his attempt to damage these prohibitions but all of his arguments ignore the divine origin of this injunction which Paul states. We must remember that the New Testament is not simply the expression of the writers' private opinions or their views on the various topics which they explore but the revelation of God's will for us. Too many times contemporary religious societies ignore this important principle.

In verses 28-31 Paul shows how pagan acts of immorality and other wickedness had made their contribution to the evils so rampant among the Gentiles. That is, paganism, with its lack of moral-ethical principles, has led to at least twenty evil acts listed in verses 28-31.

Verses 28-29 show the root of the general evil behavior of the pagan Gentiles but Paul links it specifically to the sins of homosexuality discussed in verses 26-27. First, they refused to have God in their knowledge. Once again Paul uses a very strong phrase in his description of the evil of the Gentile pagans. The expression *οὐκ εδοκίμασαν τὸν θὸν εἶναι ἐν ἐπιγνώσει* (*ouk edokimasan ton thon echein en epignōsei*) condemns the behavior of the Gentiles because their paganism lacked basic ethical-moral principles. The word *εδοκίμασαν* (*edokimasan*) is in the aorist tense (punctiliar action) and it means "to consider a thing worthy to be chosen." Paul uses the negative *οὐκ* (*ouk*), stating that these people "did *not* consider" knowledge of God worthy of consideration. The word *ἐπιγνώσει* (*epignōsei*) is present tense (linear action) and it means "to arrive at knowledge from preliminaries." The statement could be paraphrased as follows: "They did not believe it was a worthy choice for their personal conduct to be continually guided by the preliminary knowledge of God." Also see Lev. 18:22, 20:13, and I Cor. 6:9.

It is important to notice that Paul affirms the principle that "people become like the gods they worship." The lack of moral conduct and integrity in pagan polytheism is reflected in the conduct of their followers. Paul lists many of their sins and vices in verses 29-31. Contemporary "gods" are not so much the idols of the ancient world as they are the "gods" of such things as sensual pleasure, entertainment, power, position, wealth, the abuses of personal freedom and liberty, and the elevation of "my personal right to determine what is moral-immoral or ethical-unethical." There is a host of other "gods" which contemporary societies "worship." These gods are just as destructive as were the pagan gods of the ancient world. Paul's statement is severe. "God gave them over to a depraved mind." Rom. 1:28.

The final stages of the behavior described in verses 21-31 are summarized in verse 32. "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

The Problem of Sin Among Non-Pagan People: 2:1-16

In these verses Paul introduces the topic of the guilt among non-pagan people. This appears to apply particularly to the Jews although they are not specified until verse 17. There is a dynamic relationship between 2:1-16, 2:17-29, and 3:1-20 but each of these sections needs to be treated individually. Various commentators compare Paul's approach to that of Amos who condemned six of the pagan nations surrounding Israel, finally adding Judah, Israel's own brothers. Following this denunciation of the pagan nations and Judah Amos condemned Israel for its own ungodliness. Paul condemns the Gentile world in the most severe terms and no doubt the Jews would have agreed with this. However, he quickly turns to the non-pagans, probably including the Jews, and condemns them also for their own ungodliness. When they pass judgment on the Gentiles they are actually condemning themselves because they are guilty of some of the same violations. Fitzmyer refers to these people as an imaginary listener "who loudly applauds [the] description of the pagan's moral failure. Paul reacts and insists that such a person is no better than the pagan, for in spite of a superior moral culture, which may enable the interlocutor to agree with Paul's indictment of the pagan, he does not do what is expected of him by that superior status." (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 296.)

Paul's argument begins in 2:1 and moves all the way to 3:20. Because the Jews were the "covenant nation" they took on a superiority complex, believing that their relationship with God gave them a favorable status with the Almighty. Paul will show that God's judgments are impartial and that the simple possession of the Law of Moses was no guarantee against the outpouring of God's wrath. Therefore the Jews will be judged by the light given to the Jews and the pagans will be judged by the light given to the pagans. Circumcision, the sign to Israel that they were God's chosen, is really of no value if one ignores God's directives. Paul says that all human beings are sinners – Jews and Gentiles alike – and all are therefore going to come under the judgment of God. (For additional information on this see Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 296-297.)

In 2:1-16 Paul does not identify his "imaginary listener." He may have been including Gentiles who considered themselves superior to those described in chapter 1, yet their conduct may have been evil in other ways. He mentions the Jews only indirectly in verses 9 and 10 but not for the purpose of identifying them as his target population. In verse 17 he certainly begins speaking to the Jews. Verses 1-16 actually form the introduction to his overall conclusion of the universal guilt of mankind. In commenting on 2:1, J. Barmby says that many of the Greek philosophers, prior to and contemporary with Paul, considered themselves morally superior to those who were being taught because some of those teachers were living unethical and immoral lives. He speaks of Seneca whose life, he says, was not morally superior. (J. Barmby, *The Pulpit Commentary: Romans*, vol. 18, H.D.M. Spence, editor, (Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950 reprint), pp. 50-51.) If the chapter break between 1 and 2 is ignored, it is easier to see Paul's statement moving in this direction.

Commentary

Verse 1. Paul links this section to his previous statements by using the word **Διό** (*Dio*) meaning "therefore." In view of the denunciation of the sins of the Gentiles he addresses all who judge others. They are actually condemning themselves because they are practicing similar behavior.

Paul shows how easily one condemns others but fails to come face to face with himself. Many commentators refer to the Jewish fable of Abraham sitting at the gates of hell, not allowing any Jew, no matter how wicked, to enter. However, all Gentiles are doomed. On the other hand, Sanday and Headlam and some other commentators reject this characterization of the teachings of the rabbis because many upheld strict moral principles. There can be no doubt though that in general, the Jews believed that their Abrahamic ancestry, circumcision, and possession of the Law gave them preferential treatment from God. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 55.) Paul builds on these truths throughout the polemic section. Here he addresses his “imaginary listener” by referring to him (them) as “O man.” He uses the vocative case (personal address) of **ανθρωπος** (*anthrōpos*) meaning “mankind” or all human beings rather than the male gender. This pictures the “imaginary listener” as one who strongly supports Paul’s denunciation of the Gentile sinners but the condemner’s judgment of others comes back to haunt him because he is guilty of the same or similar evils. Paul’s message is, “Therefore you who judge others are also the objects of God’s wrath.”

Verse 2 brings up a very uncomfortable state of affairs. God’s judgment is according to truth, not according to preferential treatment of the people under the old covenant. We may paraphrase the sense of his statement in this way: “Therefore your sins will be held against you just as the sins of the Gentiles will be held against them.” This is similar to the thought brought against the Gentiles in 1:32.

In verse 3 Paul brings out the force of the statements he has just made. The position of the word **συ** (*su*) is emphatic, making the statement very personal and very strong. After condemning the Gentiles and showing the fault of those judgmental addressees he says, “Do *you* (emphatic) really think you will escape God’s wrath?” Paul implies that there is a tendency among his recipients to say (believe) that “Since I join God in condemning evil in others, my own evil will be overlooked or forgiven.” However, lawless behavior of all human beings will come under the judgment of God which will be according to truth. There is no escape from this. Paul echoes the truth of Is. 57:4. “Whom are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars?”

Verse 4 concludes this part of Paul’s condemnation. He attempts to get inside of their minds and inspect their true thoughts hoping that they will come face to face with their own motives. He puts this in form of a question. “Could it be that you are really showing your own egotistical hatred for God’s kindness toward non-Jews? Are you forgetting that it is God’s kindness that leads you to repentance? Have you considered the possibility that the riches of God’s goodness extends beyond the bounds of the Jewish nation?” The meaning of the word “repentance” is very important here. It is from the Greek word **μετανοια** (*metanoia*) which deals with a change of mind, heart, feelings, and motivation. It is not simply the reformation of behavior. John the Baptist speaks of such reformation as “the fruits worthy of repentance.” Matt. 3:8.

In verses 5-6 Paul points out two of the basic problems of those who are so judgmental yet are guilty of the very things they condemn in others. He also speaks of God’s own final judgment. First these people are stubborn, and second, they are unrepentant. Both of these deal not only with a person’s overt behavior but also with his heart, the source of behavior. These people are unwilling to yield to God’s will, choosing rather to do as they please. Paul uses an interesting

word to describe the stubbornness of these people. The Greek word which Paul uses here is **θησαυρίζεις** (*thēsaurizeis*). It is a verb in the present tense, 2nd person singular. *i.e.* “You are continually treasuring up” God’s wrath. By using the singular Paul makes the statement very personal and by using the present tense he emphasizes their continual stubbornness (linear action). This is the same word Jesus used in Matt. 6:19 when he contrasts “laying up treasures” on earth with “laying up treasures” in heaven. Paul’s emphasis is that they are amassing God’s wrath just as one would amass wealth. In the day of God’s judgment this “amassing” of God’s wrath will be turned against them. Although Paul does not quote from Zephaniah, the prophet’s description of God’s pending judgment against Judah is a fitting and vivid description of his wrath against sin. See Zeph. 1:14-15. This makes God’s judgment “righteous” and this righteous judgment will be meted out according to each man’s conduct. Later Paul will describe the “sinfulness of sin.”

Verses 7-11 give the consequences of a good life contrasted with the evil life of which he has been speaking. He is not advocating works salvation but he is showing the importance of obedience to God, applying it to both Gentiles and Jews. Some will persist in their efforts to please God, glorify him, and do good. They will find eternal life. Others will be self-seeking, will reject truth, and follow evil. Their destiny will be wrapped up in the wrath of God. In 1:16 Paul used the phrase, “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile” as he spoke of the gospel of God’s salvation extending to all mankind. In 2:9 he uses the same phrase to show that God’s judgment will also come to all mankind both Jew and Gentile. In verses 10-11 he restates God’s salvation emphasizing “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile” and stating the truth that there is no preferential treatment with God. In this way Paul balances the status of the Jews, God’s chosen nation, with the reality of Jewish accountability. Jews are accountable to God in the same way that the Gentiles are accountable. This would probably have been seen as a radical position since the Jews placed great emphasis on their Abrahamic ancestry. See also Jn. 8:31-42.

In verse 11 we have an interesting Greek word, **επιθειας** (*eritheias*) which is translated “self-seeking, contentious, or factious.” Sanday has a pertinent comment on this word: “From **επιθος** (*erithos*), ‘a hired laborer’ we get **επιθευω** (*eritheuō*) ‘to act as a hireling,’ **επιθευομαι** (*epitheuomai*) a political term for ‘hiring paid canvassers and promoting party spirit:’ hence **επιθεια** (*eritheia*) = the spirit of faction, the spirit which substitutes factious opposition for the willing obedience of loyal subjects of the kingdom of heaven.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 57.) In addition, Paul says that God’s judgment will be without partiality.

The information in verses 12-16 is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Here Paul deals briefly with the subject of Gentile accountability and the difficult question of those who have no knowledge of God’s revelation. We cannot answer very many of the myriad of questions which arise from this but Paul tells us that God will deal with them in a just manner. The manner in which this will take place is not disclosed. There are five basic principles which Paul states. First, those who do not have the law but commit sins will perish without the law. Second, all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. Third, it is not those who have the law who are righteous but those who obey the law. Fourth, when the Gentiles do “by nature” the things written in the law they become a law unto themselves, showing the requirements of the law written in their hearts and they act in good conscious. Fifth, this will take place when God judges the hearts of men.

In the previous verse Paul stated that there is no partiality with God as he deals with all mankind. This truth links these passages. Paul shows that there are different basic circumstances when one considers the Gentile world (without the revelation from God) and the Jewish world (those who had God's revelation in the Old Testament). Notice that Paul does not contend that those who do not know the gospel will be saved in accordance with the moral-ethical light of their own consciences. If the pagan could be saved without the knowledge of the gospel the missionary imperative of the gospel would be destroyed and the one who brought the message of Christ to the unbeliever would have been his worst enemy if the unbeliever continued in his unbelief. Then he would be lost. The RSV and NRSV add the word "perhaps" in the translation of verse 15 – "their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus." However, most English translations omit the word "perhaps." Each of the theories concerning the correct interpretation of verses 12-15 has weaknesses. We therefore conclude that there is not enough information from the text to come to a firm conclusion of the correct exegesis of the passage. This, however, does not weaken the overall message of Romans.

The Jews, the Law, and God's Faithfulness: 2:17—3:20

In many of his arguments Paul uses the diatribe. This is a method of argumentation involving the posing of a question, which the presenter knows is in the minds of his opponents, and then answering the question. It frequently takes the form of asking a question of an imaginary interrogator.

Let's begin by summarizing this block of text. To many Jews this passage must have come as a blow, shattering their past concept of the basis of their relationship to God. In 2:17-18 Paul cites four supposed towers of strength on which many of the Jews had based a good part of their theology, especially as it pertained to their status with God. These were (1) their ancestry going back to Abraham, (2) circumcision, (3) the covenant in Ex. 19, and (4) their possession of the Law of Moses.

Paul challenges the Jews to confront their own conduct and personal arrogance (2:17-24). He lists some characteristic attitudes of the Jews, many of which are commendable, but these had led many of them to adopt an air of superiority. They relied on their possession of the law, they had a special relationship to God, they knew God's will, and advocated goodness as taught in the law. There appears to be a bit of sarcasm in Paul's statements but it might not have been obvious to his recipients until verse 19. In verse 21 he touches a tender spot and condemns their behavior. "You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?" The apostle expands this and builds his case against them for their pride and their feeling of superiority as God's "favorite people." All of this brings up an important question in 2:25-29, *i.e.*, "What then constitutes a real Jew?" His answer did not include any of the four supposed towers of strength just stated and this probably would have been difficult for the Jews to accept.

In 3:1 he uses the diatribe to bring up another important question which he knows is in the minds of the Jews. "What then, is the advantage of being a Jew and what is the value of circumcision?" Paul's answer comes in 3:2-8 where he says, "Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God."

In 3:9-18 we have the summation of the universality of human sin. Here our writer cites various Old Testament passages to illustrate and support the thesis that “There is none that is righteous.” An important conclusion to this answer involves one of the basic purposes of the Law. Paul briefly defines this in 3:19-20. His final conclusion is that both Gentiles and Jews – the entire human race – are guilty before God.

Commentary

In 2:17 Paul uses the word **επονوماζῇ** (*eponomazē*) which means “you are continually called, or you continually call yourself.” It is in the present tense which is linear action. It generally refers to a particular name, and by using this word Paul may be emphasizing the personal character of the word “Jew.” He then uses the phrase **επαναποῦν νομῷ** (*epanapouē nomō*) which means “to lean upon law.” The idea of strong support given by the law is presented in this phrase. It is not simply a statement that they believe in the law, but they receive their support from it. By the time Paul gets to verse 19 his sarcasm comes through rather vividly as he describes the egotistical feelings of his own countrymen. They consider themselves enlightened, superior in knowledge of God, teachers of the foolish, etc.

In verse 18 the apostle uses the interesting word **διαφέροντα** (*diapheronta*) usually translated “excellent, essential, or that which is best.” The word can also mean “that which is different.” The emphasis of the word is a comparison between things which are inferior with things which are excellent. This was at the core of Paul’s sarcastic statement. The fault of the Jews was not their sincere desire to recognize excellent things and practice excellent behavior. Instead, it was in their arrogance in considering themselves qualified to determine these differences. What is the evidence of this arrogance? They believed themselves to be guides to the blind, light to those in darkness, teachers of the foolish, and teachers of the juvenile minds of the Gentiles. Paul sarcastically says that the basis of all of this was, “because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth.” (vss. 19-20). In the Law there was certainly the knowledge of God and truth, but possession of the Law was not the key to godliness. In most of the phrases in verses 18-20 Paul uses the 2nd person singular rather than the plural in an apparent attempt to personalize his confrontations. He is specific rather than generic.

Verse 21 falls like a hammer on Paul’s recipients. They had not learned the self-evident lesson which Jesus had also taught that “to whom much is given, much also is required” (Lk. 12:48). Paul’s observation is, “You teach others but do not heed your own instructions.” He is not only strong in this denunciation but is somewhat caustic as well. Possession of truth, the oracles of God, should have been an exalted privilege but it had become a source of bigotry. “First, you need to teach yourself, and secondly you need to practice what you teach.” In verses 21-22 Paul lists stealing, adultery, and idolatry to illustrate his point.

Of what was Paul speaking in verse 22 when he referred to robbing temples? Most popular English translations translate this, “do you rob temples.” However, the KJV translates it, “do you commit sacrilege?” The Greek word literally means to rob temples. In Deut. 7:25-26 Moses specifically forbade the possession of anything from a pagan shrine or temple. Some commentators believe that Paul is speaking symbolically. The Jews elevated the Law to the point that it had become to them like a pagan shrine. In advocating this position Fitzmyer pictures Paul as

saying, “Do you succumb to the idolatry of elevating the Mosaic law to a position of unwarranted devotion of bestowing on it a permanence it was never intended to have in God’s ultimate plan? For Paul, Israel’s clinging to the law is the exclusion of Christ and his role in God’s plan. Thus Paul uses the verb *ιεροσυλειν* [*hierosulein*] in a figurative sense and shapes to his purpose the accusation that was otherwise made against Israel in other respects.” (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 318.) On the other hand, Barmby, Sanday and Headlam, and some other commentators believe this is to be taken literally, affirming that some of the Jews were probably known to be guilty of such acts. Sanday and Barmby both cite Acts 19:37 where the town-clerk asserts that Paul and his companions are not guilty of robbing the temples. From this they both conclude that the Jews were open to such accusations. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 66.) Barmby adds two other bits of information. There are statements from Josephus and others of such isolated cases, particularly involving some of the Zealots among the Jews. Some of the early church writers also took this position. (Barmby, *op. cit.*, p. 56.) However, there is no concrete evidence that this was a widespread or common practice especially in light of the statement in Deut. 7:25-26. Paul’s concluding observation from this takes the form of a quotation from Is. 52:5 that the name of God is blasphemed because of you. Paul adds the words, “among the Gentiles” which is not found in the Isaiah passage.

Verses 25-27 give an important preliminary conclusion in Paul’s polemic. He introduces this with a rhetorical question, “What is the value of circumcision?” and he relates this to the keeping of the law. No doubt, he is speaking of the moral-ethical portions of the Law of Moses when he makes these statements. Breaking the law voids the value of circumcision. It was never designed to be a substitute for obedience but Paul speaks as if the Jews were saying, “Regardless of how we live we can rely on the fact that we have a sign in the flesh that we belonged to God.” Paul says that their failure to obey the law had the symbolic significance of their circumcision in the flesh becoming uncircumcision in their hearts. Conversely, verse 26 says that the uncircumcised Gentiles who keep the requirements of the law are considered symbolically circumcised. This means that verse 27 came as a severe blow to the Jews who placed such importance on circumcision. Those uncircumcised Gentiles who keep the provisions of the law will stand in judgment (condemnation) against the circumcised Jews who fail to obey the law which God gave to them.

Verses 28-29 answer the important question, “What then is the true definition of God’s Jew?” God’s Jew is not the one whose flesh has the sign of circumcision but the one whose heart is symbolically circumcised displaying itself in genuine devotion and obedience to God’s laws. This is circumcision of the Spirit not by the literal fulfillment of the written code. God is interested, not simply in the fleshly sign of a man’s claim to belong to the Lord but the inward spiritual devotion of a man as he strives to keep the laws of God.

The Jews and God’s Faithfulness: 3:1-8

In verse 1 Paul employs the diatribe again. He pictures the Jewish Christians’ probable reaction to his statements in 2:25-29 in this way: “Paul, if things are as you describe, what advantage is there in being a Jew and what is the value of circumcision?” The apostle first gives a generic answer, (“Much in every way”) then he modifies it by specifying the Jews’ possession of *τα λογια του θεου* (*ta logia tou theou*) “the oracles – the very words – of God.”). The word

λογια is used only twice in the New Testament and in both instances it is accusative plural of λογιον (*logion*). Kindred words, built on the same stem, occur frequently in the New Testament. This phrase is interesting because it had a technical theological meaning even before its use in the New Testament. In pre-Christian days it was considered “a saying which may be traced back to the deity.” In the LXX the word is used to refer to the oracles uttered by Balaam in Num. 24:4, 16. It is also found in various other Old Testament passages. In Acts 7:38 Stephen used the expression λογια ζωντα δουναι υμιν (*logia zōnta dounai humin*) which is translated, “living oracles to give to you.” At times in the LXX the word λογια (*logia*) is accompanied by του θεου (*tou theou*) “of God” but even without this phrase the word is generally considered “the very words of God.” (Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 137-139.)

The number one advantage of being a Jew was that they were entrusted with the very words of God. Paul is probably speaking of the entire Old Testament but his direct application refers primarily to the Law of Moses. It may be significant that he does not address the value of circumcision at this point. He will take up that topic again in 4:9-12. In 3:3 he anticipates the reasoning of the Jewish Christians as if they were saying, “Jewish infidelity to the Law caused God to void the true meaning of circumcision – the sign of the covenant. Therefore God has not been faithful to his promise to Abraham’s descendants.” In verse 4 Paul answers this by saying, “Not at all. God will be true to his promise even if every man is found to be a liar.” The phrase μη γενοιτο (*mē ginoito*) is used ten times in Romans. This is a very strong expression in the optative mood which is the mood of strong contingency or possibility. When used with the negative μη it carries the strongest possible expression of the impossibility of something taking place. (H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), pp. 172-174.) The strength of this mood is impossible to translate literally so linguists express its strength as “God forbid,” “may it never be,” “absolutely not under any circumstances,” or “certainly not.” Paul illustrates his point by quoting a statement from Ps. 51:4. In its original context the psalmist acknowledges God’s justice in the condemnation of sin. God’s punishment for sin is evidence of his unbiased justice.

In verses 5-8 Paul poses a group of questions which might have been in the minds of his addressees. We can paraphrase these in this way: “Can’t God’s righteous character be more clearly seen if we are unrighteous and are ultimately forgiven by a just and merciful God? Therefore isn’t it unrighteous when God punishes us for our sins.” In other words I may say, “My badness can actually be used to demonstrate God’s goodness because in his mercy, God forgives me.” Paul continues: “If my lie emphasizes God’s truth and consequently brings glory to him, why am I condemned as a sinner?” Once again Paul says μη γενοιτο (*mē ginoito*), “Absolutely not!” If this were sound reasoning there would be no basis on which to judge the world. This is like saying, “Let’s do evil that good may come.” Some were accused of this very thing. God’s condemnation is just when brought against those whose behavior is based on this. See Rom. 6:1 for a similar objection and answer. From a contemporary viewpoint, these are the types of objections which some people bring against the doctrine of grace. Today some say that grace does not emphasize the seriousness of sin or the necessity of obedience as strongly as law.

Circumcision

Circumcision was by no means exclusive with the Jews. It was practiced by the Egyptians and most Semites except the Babylonians and Assyrians. With the exception of the Philistines, most of the nations adjacent to Israel and Judah also practiced circumcision although it did not have the religious significance among other nationalities as it did among the Hebrews. It was practiced among some of the Middle Eastern countries prior to the time of Abraham but the time and other circumstances of its origin are unknown. It was not practiced in most western European countries. The Greeks considered it mutilation and their high opinion of the human body made it particularly objectionable to them. When Antiochus Epiphanes returned to Syria after his unsuccessful and humiliating experience in Egypt he profaned the Jerusalem Temple, forbade the observance of the Sabbath, the practice of circumcision, and other religious practices of the Jews. After the Hasmonean success against the Syrians circumcision became a very important mark of Jewish fidelity to God. During the reign of Hadrian, the Roman emperor, A.D. 117-138, an edict was published making circumcision a capital crime. That edict was a partial cause of the Bar-Kokhba revolt in A.D. 132.

Circumcision was a confusing practice to some of the early Jewish Christians. Paul contended that it was not necessary under Christ but to hold down any possible objections among the Jews to whom he brought the gospel, he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). Timothy's mother was a Jewess but his father was a Greek. Paul refused to have Titus, a Greek, circumcised. (Gal. 2:3). The Council at Jerusalem, Acts 15, was called to consider this topic along with other Judaic religious practices which were brought into Christianity. The decision of the apostles was that these practices should not be bound on the Gentile converts to Christianity.

Circumcision was to be a sign that the person belonged to God's covenant nation. It therefore had a religious signification among the Hebrews, Gen. 17:9-14. However, one of the problems arising among the Jews in the Christian community was their misunderstanding of the original purpose and significance of the rite itself and of the function of the Hebrew nation in God's plan. In Gen. 17 its significance is simply as a mark or sign that the child was a member of the chosen community. That community was the Hebrew nation, but this became confusing to many of the early Jewish Christians. In Acts 28:17-27 a large group of "leaders of the Jews" visited Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome. These Jewish visitors spoke of Christianity as a "sect" and this appears to have been the position of at least some of the Jewish Christians whom Paul addressed in Romans and Galatians. As such, some Jews probably thought of it in much the same way as they thought of the Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes. Therefore their conclusion would naturally have been that a Gentile must first "become a Jew" in order to become a member of this new Jewish "sect" founded by Jesus Christ. In their minds, this would necessitate the continuation of circumcision in order for a non-Jew to be admitted to the Christian community.

No One is Righteous: 3:9-20

Having sufficiently answered the Jews' questions and misunderstandings about the basis of their relationship with God, Paul goes on to show that, based on the true meaning of the Greek word *δικαιος* (*dikaio*s), "righteous," no one, whether Jew or Greek qualifies as a righteous person.

(See Chapter II for comments on the meaning of this Greek word.) Because of their sins, all humans are under the just condemnation of God. This is Paul's conclusion based on the arguments presented in 1:18—3:8.

He opens this block with a rhetorical two-part question. "What can we conclude from this?" and "Are we Jews any better than the Gentiles?" His brief answer is, "We have concluded that both are under sin." This is followed by various quotations from the Old Testament which support his conclusion. It should be noted that Paul is speaking in terms of the true meaning of "righteousness" not just in terms of one's personal "good life" as judged by his fellows. In verse 9 he uses the word "sin" as a noun for the first time in the book although it was used twice in its verb form in 2:12. The severity of sin will play a major role in Paul's general polemic and his conclusions. He shows that "we Jews" are as guilty of sin as "those Gentiles."

Commentary

In verses 9-18 he links a whole group of statements from the "oracles of God" with which the Jews had been entrusted (3:2). They are strung together as if they all came from the same reference. He quotes or paraphrases Eccl. 7:20, Ps. 14:1-3 (or perhaps Ps. 53:1), Ps. 5:9-10, Ps. 10:7, Ps. 140:3, Is. 59:7-8 (or perhaps Prov. 1:16), and Ps. 36:1. Various commentators believe that there is some question concerning which of these references Paul has in mind since similar language is used in different places and there is some overlap in them. He uses these statements as isolated slogans but he does not relate them to their original contexts. His objective here is not to exegete the statements in the Old Testament background but to show that the unrighteousness of Israel is confirmed many times and in a variety of circumstances throughout its history. In these quotations pagan idolatry is condemned, but so are Jewish folly and self-righteousness. Paul does not quote some of his sources exactly but paraphrases them applying them in different ways than the original writers intended. For the most part he uses the LXX in these citations. Verse 13 specifies some of the faults of those he cites as he speaks of their corrupt and deceitful speech.

In verse 19 he reminds his recipients that the Law is speaking to those to whom it was addressed, *i.e.*, the Jews. By saying "that every mouth may be stopped" he is affirming that the law was to be considered binding on them. In this way the whole world would come under the judgment of God. The Gentiles will be judged by a just God according to the light available to them and the Jews will be judged according to the law given to them.

Verse 20 brings in three very important observations. The apostle begins with the word "therefore." In view of what he has just said, here are the rightful conclusions. First, the Law is not your savior because law has no power to forgive. It only defines good and evil, right and wrong. The Jews had sinned within the Law of Moses while the Gentiles had sinned outside of the Law of Moses. This did not imply that the Gentiles had no legal responsibilities since they did not come under the Law of Moses. Some commentators believe that Paul is using the word "law" to include the entire Old Testament. (Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.) In 3:23 he will say that "all have sinned." Second, no one, Jew or Gentile, qualifies as "legally righteous" because "there is none that is righteous, no not so much as one." This is abundantly affirmed in the Old Testament. Third, one of the great purposes of the Law is that it brings the knowledge of sin. As Paul

develops this premise he will show the complete inadequacy of law – any law – when it comes to forgiveness. Mankind has always thought in terms of law and a good life without considering the severity of sin. On the other hand, Paul will show that only God's grace, demonstrated in the gift of Christ's atonement, can forgive. Simply expressed he says, "Our present goodness cannot forgive our past badness."

Chapter VI

Righteousness Through Faith

Rom. 3:21—4:25

Righteousness, Atonement, Faith, and Works: 3:21-31

This block of Scripture is one of the most important in the New Testament. It gives us insight into the true nature of the gospel, motivation in the Christian life, and a view of the great love of God as he takes the initiative in offering Christ as the gift of atonement. If we fail to understand Paul's explanation here, we fail to understand the unique character of the gospel story. A causal reading will never bring the true significance of this passage to the surface. Most serious students of the New Testament continue to be amazed as they reread this magnificent description of the mind of God. It is truly profound, and it never loses its challenge.

Commentary

Verse 21 fittingly introduces us to a fundamental doctrine, *i.e.* “the righteousness of God which comes through faith.” Two observations come from this. Paul has just told us that “there is none that is righteous.” Therefore the first of these observations is that we are all sinners and we are all in equal need of justification (forgiveness). The second observation is that justification is provided by God through the gift of Christ. However, there is a caveat involved. Access to this justification comes only by faith (trust) in the atonement provided by Christ. Paul will develop these two observations to show that no human achievement or the good life of anyone, Jew or Gentile, can provide justification or forgiveness of sins. This is the core of salvation history reaching back to the beginning of sin (Gen. 3) and moving through the resurrection of Christ. The significance of Old Testament history does not reside simply in the God-Israel relationship, but in the initiative of God in providing atonement. Righteousness does not come from works of the law. Instead, the law was designed to bring the knowledge of sin.

The revelation of God's righteousness is “apart from the law but it is attested by the law.” Paul uses the phrase *χωρίς νομου* (*chōris nomou*), which is translated “without the law” (KJV), “apart from the law” (ASV, NASV), and “apart from law” (RSV, NRSV, and NIV). A significant difference in these translations is the inclusion of “the” in the KJV, ASV, and NASV. The force of the passage is that justification through faith is outside the bounds (function) of law. Paul will show the practical importance of this in vss. 27-28 but the theological importance is much more significant. This appears to emphasize the truth that law of any kind – secular, criminal, or religious – does not have the power to justify (forgive).

From the vantage point of some Jewish Christians, the gospel was considered somewhat subservient to the Mosaic Law, *i.e.* Christianity grew out of the Law. Many of the Jews believed it was a “sect” of Judaism as expressed in Acts 28:22. The law and the prophets testified to the manifestation of the gospel message of Christ's atonement. Paul does not alienate the Old Testament from the New but shows that the Old testified to the validity of the New.

In this passage, Paul uses the word *νομος* (*nomos*), “law,” in two different ways. In the first part

of verse 21 he speaks of righteousness “apart from law” referring to one’s obedience to law, particularly the Law of Moses. In the latter part of the verse he uses the same word to refer to the Old Testament as a whole. We must remember that to the Jews, the Old Testament was made up of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Paul’s message is that the Old Testament as such testified to the gospel message. He does not specifically show what he meant when he said that the Law and the prophets testify to the gospel but it is significant that he does not use the word πληρωω (*plēroō*), the ordinary word translated “to fulfill.” He is not speaking of Christ and the gospel as the “fulfillment” of Old Testament prophetic statements. Instead he uses μαρτυρεω (*maartureō*) which means to offer testimony or give evidence. Thus, taken in its broadest sense, Paul says that there is a dynamic connection between the Old Testament (and therefore Judaism) and the gospel with its atonement. The sacrifice of so many animals under the Law was evidence of the sinfulness of the individuals making those offerings. Furthermore, from a gospel viewpoint, the inadequacy of the Old Testament sacrifices gives evidence of the necessity of Christ’s sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews makes an important point of this in chapters 9-10.

In verse 22 Paul uses the expression δια πιστεως Ιησου Χριστου (*dia pisteōs Iēsou Christou*). Scholars debate the translation and meaning of the phrase. Grammatically it can be translated either “through faith *in* Christ” or “through the faith *of* Christ.” The first example is objective and the second is subjective. The question is this: “Does Paul refer to an individual’s faith (trust) in Jesus Christ and his atoning death on the cross? (objective) or does he refer to the fidelity of Christ in carrying out his divine mission which included suffering and crucifixion?” (subjective). In one case the emphasis is on the individual who exercises personal faith in Jesus Christ (the object of our faith) while the other emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ faithfully carried out his mission of suffering and crucifixion so that justification (forgiveness) could be offered to all mankind. As stated above, both of these represent faithful translations and are theologically correct. It may be that Paul used this particular expression purposely to communicate both ideas, since both of these thoughts fit perfectly into his argument. The phrase is usually translated “faith *in* Jesus Christ.”

Verse 23 continues the idea: “to all who believe. There is no distinction for all [both Jews and Gentiles] have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” This phrase demonstrates the important truth that, although the Jews were at an advantage because of their possession of the oracles of God (3:1-2), this fact did not provide them with preferential treatment in justification. Their sins were just as condemning as were the sins of the Gentiles. The sins of all mankind are historical facts which cannot be erased (forgiven) by one’s present and future “goodness” (salvation by meritorious works).

Verse 24 introduces us to the meaning of grace. With the exception of his introduction (1:5, 7) this is Paul’s first use of the word as part of his polemic. It is critical that we understand his concept here because he says “we are justified *freely* by his grace.” William Sanday shows that the position of the Greek words, τη αυτου χαριτι (*tē atou chariti*) emphasize the origin of grace. It is grace (gift) which comes from God, not a wage which results from man’s works. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 86.) With the controversy of faith and works which Paul addresses, this would have been an important point for the apostle to make. There is an implied contrast between God’s free gift (grace) and man’s own goodness (works). Paul also emphasizes

the cost of redemption as expressed many times in the New Testament – Acts 20:28, I Cor. 6:19-20, Gal. 2:20, 3:13, I Pet. 2:21-23, etc. The full force of this is found in the verses which follow.

Salvation by grace, as Paul will describe it, is difficult for people (both ancient and modern) to comprehend because we tend to place great value on our obedience and godly lives. Is there any true value in our obedience? The free grace of which Paul speaks does not minimize the importance or the value of obedience to the Lord's injunctions, but we must constantly face the fact that obedience to law – any law – does not endow one with justification. With the proper understanding of God's grace, freely given, the Christian's motivation to obey is placed on a much higher plain. Obedience is now an act of the deepest gratitude to God rather than the endeavor to gain salvation. It changes the emphasis from the individual's goodness (and his own desire for reward) to God's incredible love for sinful man.

In verses 25-26 Paul presents the problem which God faced in his desire to justify sinful man. The "problem" is this: "How can God be merciful (a justifier and forgiver of sinful man) and at the same time maintain his own perfect justice (the satisfaction of all legal demands) in fulfilling his desire to bring guilty mankind to spend eternity with him?" Paul shows that it was only through the voluntary sacrifice of God himself that this could be accomplished. (See Jn. 1:2 "the Word was God," and Jn. 1:14 "the Word became flesh.") However, this involved another important element. Although Paul gives us information concerning the sacrifice of Christ, he does not attempt to tell us how or why this sacrifice accomplished the goal. It is at this point that the exercise of complete trust in the atonement comes into play. First, Paul says that the basic element of this was that God presented Christ as the sacrifice of atonement. Second, the benefit of this sacrifice comes to an individual by the exercise of his personal trust in that atonement. Obedience to any kind of law could never accomplish forgiveness (justification) because forgiveness is outside of the purview or power of law. The function of law is confined to defining what is acceptable (good) or not acceptable (evil).

At this point it is important that we look at the meaning the Greek word *ἱλαστήριον* (*hilastērion*). It is generally translated by the English words "propitiation," "sacrifice of atonement," or "expiation." The word and its cognates occur only about six times in the New Testament; Lk. 18:13, Rom. 3:25, Heb. 2:17, Heb. 9:5, I Jn. 2:2, and I Jn. 4:10 but it occurs rather frequently in the LXX. In Heb. 9:5 it is translated "mercy-seat," or "atonement cover." Unfortunately, the words "atonement," "propitiation," and "expiation" are not commonly used in everyday English and their meaning is therefore obscure. Generally speaking, the meaning of this Greek word is "a sacrifice which is offered in order to appease wrath."

Paul says that God present Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice. The Greek word *προεθετο* (*proetheto*) means "to present publically or to set forth." This means that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ was designed by God to be a public event, not something which was done away from public view. In Acts 26:26 Paul told Festus that the things of which he spoke were not done in a corner. Christ was publically executed so there could be no misunderstanding or secrecy concerning the fact of his death. At first glance the idea of propitiation – "a sacrifice which is offered in order to appease wrath" – appears contradictory to Paul's statements of God's grace (3:24), his initiative, and his love. However, we must remember that God's wrath is against the sin (which he hates) not the sinner (whom he loves). The Greek word *ἱλαστήριον*

(*hilastērion*) declares the means by which God's wrath is removed (satisfied) thus paving the way for reconciliation. Sanday fittingly describes the concept in this way: "What it all amounts to is that the religion of the New Testament, like the religion of the Old, has the idea of sacrifice as one of its central conceptions, not however scattered over an elaborate ceremonial system but concentrated in a single many-sided and far-reaching act." (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 94.) This "many-sided and far-reaching act" of which Sanday speaks was the death and resurrection of Christ.

In verse 25 Paul uses the expression "by faith in his blood." This not only brings up the scene of the shedding of Christ's blood but it also links it to the propitiatory sacrifices of the Old Testament. The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the shedding of blood under the Old Covenant stating that almost everything was cleansed by the shedding of blood, and without this there is no remission. See the entire 9th chapter of Hebrews, but particularly Heb. 9:22. The connection is not specified here or in Rom. 3:25 but early in the Old Testament, Gen. 9:4-5, life is said to be in the blood. The linkage of blood sacrifice and one's salvation is clearly seen though not explained. The necessity of shedding blood is combined with the most important components of the message of forgiveness in both Old and New Testaments.

With this in mind we see the reasons for the Old Testament sacrifices more clearly. They were not merely the meaningless killing of animals but a spiritual experience in which the worshipper participated in an act which, though inadequate, combined the wrath of God against sin and God's unbounded love for the offerer. These facts show five important components in the gospel message: (1) the seriousness of sin, (2) the love of God, (3) the sacrifice of Christ, (4) the faith of the individual, and (5) the resulting reconciliation of the sinner to his Creator. Yet the atonement remains a story of "foolishness to the Gentiles." This is Paul's description of the foolish wisdom of men (I Cor. 1:23). The mystery of the atonement always remains. It calls on us to trust in that which is beyond our power to comprehend, *i.e.* what God has done through Christ. The whole idea of one suffering for the sins of another – a vicarious sacrifice – is beautifully described in Is. 53. A careful and devotional reading of this chapter cannot help but leave the reader with a profound sense of gratitude and debt.

In God's love for all mankind this ultimate atonement through Christ must reach back to those who sinned "beforehand" as well as those who sin in the present. However, Paul does not go into detail on this. God's grace is accessed through one's faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that Paul uses the phrase **δια πίστεως** (*dia pisteōs*), "through faith," or "by means of faith." The contrast is between the belief that justification is accessed through one's own goodness (works of law) and the true doctrine that justification is accessed through faith (trust) in Christ's atonement. This is a theme which Paul addresses constantly in the epistle, sometime directly and sometime indirectly.

Verse 26 encapsulates an important truth. Through Christ's offering of atonement, God showed himself to be a just God but at the same time a God of incalculable love and mercy. He sent his own Son to become a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The initiative was with God, not with men. The sacrifice was voluntary, not compulsory. All of this was done with no guarantee from human beings that they would respond in faith to this gift of God's grace.

In verses 27-28 our author makes an important observation and draws an essential conclusion. Again he uses the diatribe to present his case, asking the rhetorical question, “Where then is the boasting?” The truth of what he has just described (verses 21-26) leaves no room whatever for anyone to boast about his own good works. How does grace exclude boasting? Paul will develop both of these questions as his polemic moves along. Three elements, which we have mentioned above, are evident. First, the gospel initiative originated with God, not man. Second, the means of justification was God’s act through Christ rather than man’s meritorious works. Third, man’s access to this grace comes only through his commitment of trust in Christ’s atoning sacrifice rather than through a group of ceremonial observances performed by the sinner. Paul’s conclusion regarding boasting is contained in his statement, “It is excluded.” To this he adds another question but he also gives an answer; “On what principle?” His answer is in the form of a negative and a positive: “Not by a law of works but by an act of trust” (verse 28). John Murray introduces the possibility that this boasting is not necessarily confined to the Jewish Christians but may also apply to the Gentiles as well. After all, many people, whether Jew or Gentile take pride in their good, benevolent, moral lives and this behavior is considered a means of justification (forgiveness). (Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.) See the discussion of this in Chapter II.

Verses 29-31 wrap up this portion of his argument. First, he reminds his addressees of a truth which they all acknowledge, *i.e.* there is only one God and he is the God of both Jew and Gentile. His second observation is that since both Jew and Gentile are equally guilty, this one God will justify both through their trust in the atonement provided by Christ. Third, he addresses the importance of the Law. From what Paul had already said, the Jewish Christians might very well have concluded that the Law really had very little significance since it did not accomplish hardly anything which they thought it should have achieved. However, Paul addresses this anticipated objection by showing that what he has just said, the proper understanding of faith, grace, and atonement, really establish the validity of the Law. This places the law of Moses in its true perspective thus upholding its original purpose, one part of which is to bring the knowledge of sin (3:20).

The Faith of Abraham and David. 4:1-8

Paul has already employed the diatribe many times, and he begins this section in that way. In these verses (1-8) he appears to have two goals in mind. First, he wants to show that it was Abraham’s faith, not his works, which brought God’s justification (righteousness). Second, he uses David to illustrate a somewhat different point. It appears that David knew the requirements of legal justification – absolute conformity to the Law – and recognized the impossibility for a sinful man to find justification except through God’s own gift of forgiveness. Therefore he looks to God and sees this blessedness coming to those “whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered.”

Commentary

The chapter opens with a question which Paul anticipates; “What has Abraham discovered in reference to faith?” He expands the question by stating that it was not through works that Abraham’s justification came. How then did this justification come to the father of the Hebrew nation? Paul answers this by quoting from Gen. 15:6, “Abraham believed God and it was credited

to him as righteousness.” The operative word here is “believed.” This becomes the springboard from which Paul will launch this portion of his argument.

In verses 1-3 we must be careful to see that Paul is not discussing Abraham’s receiving justification through God’s grace, but the apostle is emphasizing Abraham’s faith and God’s pronouncement of justification for Abraham. The point of this illustration is not *what* Abraham received, but *why* God declared him to be righteous. The answer is implied by the character of the question and Paul’s brief comment. First, Paul says that if Abraham’s works had been the basis of his righteousness he might have had room to boast about it. However, that boasting would not have been in reference to God but in reference to his own achievements. When speaking of Abraham’s righteousness Paul uses the word **ελογισθη** (*elogisthē*) translated “credited.” It was used in both secular and religious circles to identify credits vs. debits. It was also used to describe the assignment of guilt. It appears this way in the LXX in such passages as Ex. 32:32 and Mal. 3:16. Various ancient oriental monarchs kept records of good and bad deeds of their subjects along with rewards or punishments. (See Esth. 6:1-3.) Some commentators believe that the Jews may have had an idea of transferring merits and demerits from one person to another. Thus Ezekiel is thought by some to be referring to this practice in Ezek. 18:19-20. However, this does not seem to have been widespread, but the idea of the imputation or crediting of righteousness would not have been completely foreign to the ancient people in or outside of Judaism.

In verses 4-5 Paul gives logical conclusions to his thesis. If a man works, he is supposed to be paid. That payment is not a gift, but an earned wage. Therefore he has reason to be proud of his work and the wages he has earned. However, this was not the situation with Abraham. It was not his work which resulted in his justification from God and there was no obligation on God’s part to “credit his account” with righteousness. Therefore his righteousness was a gift which God had credited to him. Paul’s point is that Abraham’s faith (trust) rather than Abraham’s works was the conduit of God’s gift.

Verses 6-9 deal with David. When speaking of David, Paul approaches justification from a different beginning point and for a different purpose. He quotes from Ps. 32:1-2. The example of David has been called an “accessory” to Paul’s statement about Abraham. In Ps. 32:1-2 David speaks of the blessedness of a person who has been forgiven. The Greek word **μακαρισμον** (*makarismōn*) is used here. It means to “pronounce a person blessed or to call a person blessed or happy.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 101.) Hauck says that this word was used at first to describe the state of the gods as the “transcendent happiness of a life beyond care, labor, and death. . . . **μακαριος** is then used of men to denote the state of godlike blessedness hereafter in the isles of the blessed.” (F. Hauck, “**μακαριος**,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. IV, edited by Gerhard Kittel, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 1967, p. 362.) It is difficult to maintain the depth of this word when translating it into other languages since it is descriptive of a happiness which is not attached to one’s possessions (what he has or wants), his state of health, or any other condition. As such, this state of “happiness” cannot be taken away by any set of circumstances. In Ps. 32 this is David’s description of the forgiven man.

In verse 10 Paul shows that the covenant of circumcision and the Law of Moses were both in force during David’s life, but when God pronounced justification for Abraham neither of these

existed. In David's case, Paul is showing that the righteousness of which he is speaking was not foreign to the Old Testament although it was not fully developed as it is under Christ. Without verbally linking righteousness and faith in Ps. 32, David simply affirms the blessedness of the man whose sins are covered and against whom God will not count sins. There is an unspoken truth here which must be understood in order to grasp David's statement. That is, David does not link his forgiveness to the Law, circumcision, or to any kind of meritorious work. Instead, he recognizes that forgiveness is the gift of God which is not earned but is freely provided by the Lord.

Having established the fact that neither the works of the Law nor the covenant of circumcision brought Abraham's justification and David's blessedness was not connected to David's meritorious works, Paul asks the question, "Is this blessedness for the Jews only ('the circumcised') or is it not for the Gentile also (the 'uncircumcised')?" This lays the groundwork for his important observation in verses 10-12. The chronology of events forms an important part of Paul's conclusion. The declaration of Abraham's righteousness (Gen. 15:6) came prior to the covenant of circumcision (Gen. 17:9-14) and certainly prior to the giving of the Law (Ex. 20ff). The conclusion is that neither circumcision nor the Law were necessary prerequisites to the declaration of Abraham's righteousness.

In verse 11 we have two words to describe the meaning of circumcision. First Paul says it was a **σημειον** (*sēmeion*), which is translated "the sign." It is used most frequently to describe the miracles of Jesus demonstrating his divine power but the thrust of the word was not so much the nature of the act as it was the declaration of the significance of the act. The "sign" points to something outside of itself. When commenting on **σημειον** (*sēmeion*) Richard Trench says, "The prime object and end of the miracle is to lead us to something out of and beyond itself; that, so to speak is a kind of finger-post of God." (Trench, *Op. cit.*, pp. 342-343.) He lists seven words which are used in the New Testament in reference to supernatural events but they are not confined to the supernatural. Therefore, in our context, Paul is saying that circumcision was a mark to identify that person as a member of the covenant which God made with Abraham. Although circumcision was practiced by a variety of ancient nations, to the Hebrews it was a "sign" – an indicator – in the flesh which said, "This individual belongs to the covenant." See the discussion of circumcision in Chapter II.

Paul's other word referring to circumcision is **σφραγιδα** (*sphyragida*), which is translated "a seal." This word was used to identify the imprint left by a signet ring or other such device. Arndt and Gingrich refer to this word as "a stamp or seal of approval or a certificate" (William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Fourth edition, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 1952, p. 804). Thayer says it means "that by which anything is confirmed, proved, or authenticated (a token of proof)." (Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (New York: American Book Company, 1889), p. 609.) We conclude from these words that as a sign, circumcision pointed to the *existence* of the covenant relationship of the individual and God while the "seal" was God's *authentication or genuine nature* of that relationship. Paul's main point is that circumcision was not the gateway to a right relationship to God (righteousness) but faith was that gateway. This is adequately demonstrated with the example of Abraham. The importance of circumcision or the Law is not diminished by this but it places both in their correct position and

points to their significance as components of God's plan.

Verses 12-15 bring Paul's main conclusions in this text. First, since neither circumcision nor the Law were conditions of the declaration of Abraham's righteous relationship with God, Paul says that this not only qualifies him to be the father of the Hebrew people (the Jews) but he is also the father of others who exercise the same trust as he exercised prior to his circumcision. In verse 13 Paul affirms two types of descendants coming from Abraham, neither of which depend on the Law. There are those who are his fleshly descendants (the Hebrew nation) and also his spiritual descendants (those who exercise faith, regardless of their ancestry). Second, if only those under the Law were the heirs of the promise to Abraham, then faith would be void and the promise itself would be worthless. Paul brings up important key-words which oppose each other. Grace, faith, and promise are arrayed against the Jewish theological concept of law, works, and merit. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 110.) The Jews apparently overlooked the actual idea of Gen. 12:1-3 which says that through Abraham *all* of the families of the earth would be blessed (not exclusively the Hebrews). Barmby adds an important comparison on these verses. He says, "Law simply *declares* what is right, and requires conformity to it; it does not give either *power* to obey, or *atonement* for not obeying. Hence, in itself, it worketh, not righteousness but *wrath*; for man becomes fully liable to wrath when he comes to know, through law, the difference between right and wrong." (Barmby, *op. cit.*, p. 109.) Gal. 3:21 gives supplementary information: "Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law." Obviously, such a law would completely void the mission of Christ and the necessity of his atonement at Calvary. In verse 15 Paul makes the statement that "where there is no law there is no transgression." Notice that he did not say, "Where there is no *knowledge* of law there is no transgression." Paul uses the word *παράβασις* (*parabasis*) which refers to a "deviation, violation, or disregard" of the law. Paul's message is that there can be no violation or deviation of law if no law exists. Therefore, sin (transgression) would be completely absent under such circumstances.

Verses 16-25 conclude Paul's argument involving Abraham's faith. This clears the way for the remainder of the polemic section showing how faith and grace function in man's justification. He begins by saying that since righteousness (justification) does not depend on the Law it can be a true gift from God – grace – and therefore can come to all of Abraham's descendants whether physical or spiritual. See also Gal. 3:26-29. If justification depended on law (any law) it would be by means of works rather than by grace through faith.

In verse 16 Paul uses a confusing expression. He has just finished showing that justification is not "of the law" but in this verse he identifies the Jews as "of the law" and the Gentiles as "of the faith of Abraham." He is using the expression "of the law" (vs. 16) in a different sense than his previous expressions, "through the law" (vs. 13) and "by the law" (vs. 14). "Of the law" would have been a fitting identification of the Jews since they were the only ones who had received the law and they took pride in their possession of it.

The promise to Abraham, as shown in Gen 17:5, includes the statement, "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations." The word Abram means "exalted father" but the word Abraham means "father of many." Paul has shown that this idea includes the Gentiles as well as the Israelites. The last part of verse 17 reads

almost like a doxology. Paul extols God “who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.” The expression “life to the dead” may be a symbolic reference to Abraham who is physically dead but whose faith is “alive” in those who trust implicitly in God’s promises. Though Abraham is not with us, his example of faith is ever-present.

Verses 18-25 speak of the application of Abraham’s faith. What did this deep trust cause him to do? Abraham experienced the same emotions as we experience when facing what seems to be an impossible situation yet one in which we have absolute expectations of a favorable outcome. The word *ἐλπις* (*elpis*), translated “hope,” is more than one’s wish for good things to happen. Rudolf Bultmann, in his discussion of this word in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says, “If hope is fixed on God, it embraces at once the three elements of expectation of the future, trust, and the patience of waiting. Any one of these aspects may be emphasized.” (Kittle, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 531.) Paul’s description of Abraham’s hope perfectly fits this analysis of the word. Faith, expectation, and patience dominated Abraham with regard to his own body, which he considered as good as dead, and the fact that Sarah was past the age of bearing children. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born. In spite of these obstacles he did not waiver through unbelief. Instead, the promise of God was so compelling that his faith gained strength in the process and he glorified God. He was convinced that God, who had made the promise, also had the power to perform what he had promised. At this point Paul shows that the Old Testament account was valuable for more than its historical information about Abraham. The action of God in crediting Abraham with righteousness was not written simply as a matter of history but it had the far reaching effect of helping Christians understand the nature, the demands, and the operation of faith. Saving faith for the Jew was the same as saving faith for the Gentile.

The final statement of chapter 4 is that Christ was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised from the dead for our justification. This references the entire argument which Paul has made thus far. Guilt of sin – violation of God’s laws – is man’s fundamental problem and it has infected all mankind (Jew and Gentile alike). This guilt is universal. Law only defines good and evil but does not forgive, nor does our meritorious behavior forgive our violations. Our past badness cannot be forgiven by our present or future goodness. Only through Christ’s atonement – the gracious gift of God – is justification (forgiveness) possible. This atonement brings justification through our complete trust as we follow Abraham’s example of faith.

Chapter VII

Peace and Joy vs. Sin and Death

Rom. 5:1-21

The Security of Salvation Through Grace: 5:1-11

Chapter 5 begins Paul's second part of his polemic. Having discussed justification by grace through faith, 1:16—4:22, he now moves to the results or consequences of such justification. This will occupy 5:1—8:39. He has a number of mini-climaxes in the epistle, and Rom. 5:1-2 is one of them. He has yet to come to the grand statement of 8:31-39 but the present block is certainly an important step along the way. Justification by faith has both immediate and remote consequences. The immediate consequences are such things as peace with God, hope (secure expectation), and courage in persecution. The remote consequence is the assurance of one's salvation demonstrated by the loving gift of Christ.

Paul's beginning word, "Therefore," sets the stage for these observations. The truths disclosed in chapters 3-4 must have been startling to many of his recipients who were strongly entrenched in the theology of "salvation by works." Verse 1 is akin to 8:1 in that both of them emphasize the security of salvation by grace apart from meritorious works. In 5:1 he says that justification by grace through faith is the source of man's peace with God and in 8:1 he states that to those in Christ Jesus "there is no condemnation." Neither of these devalues the importance of obedience but each exalts the motivation for one's obedience – it is not in order to gain salvation through one's good deeds but the expression of profound gratitude for the love of God in providing the gift of atonement.

Paul implies an important contrast in this block of text. Having dealt with the severity of sin and the impossible state of affairs into which sin had plunged mankind, Paul turns to some of the practical implications of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In 5:1-11 he first mentions the peace with God which displaces the uncertainty of works salvation. Hope becomes more than a mere wish or desire; it becomes the secure expectation for believers (5:1). Even their suffering takes on a new meaning because it produces perseverance and their perseverance is not in vain. Grace is the only way mankind can understand his own lack of power to bring justification to himself through his own meritorious works. This is precisely what Jesus did. He did not die for the righteous or the good, but for the sinner. By comparing this act of Christ to human relationships Paul emphasizes the rarity that one would willingly give his own life to rescue an evil person. Yet, this is what Christ did on the cross. Another important part of Paul's conclusions is that this saves us from God's wrath against our sins. His reason is that Christ alone has paid the full price. One of the great products of justification is reconciliation.

Commentary

In verse 1 Paul's former way of life as a Pharisee and his personal experience appear to be strongly reflected. Peace with God is totally frustrated for one who depends on works as the means of justification. From the early life of Saul of Tarsus we believe that this was strong motivation for his persecution of Christians. For such a person there is never any true assurance of

his status with God. “Have I done enough?” is always the question in his mind but it is also a question which never has a favorable or “peace providing” answer. Paul shows that man’s total trust in the atonement of Christ (God’s grace) is the only “peace providing” remedy. This is the peace-filled crucible or enclosure in which the Christian lives and is protected by the Lord. But this crucible is not a place of passive peace but it is filled with the activity and obedience of its occupant in order to express gratitude to the Lord for that unspeakable gift. Pride and arrogance at one’s achievements or his goodness is completely swept aside by grace. True humility is the offspring of one’s acceptance of God’s grace – a difficult lesson to learn.

For the first time in Romans, Paul uses the aorist tense of **δικαιοῶ** (*dikaioō*), “justified or made righteous,” to refer to Christians. Paul used the aorist in 3:4 referring to God and in 4:2 referring to Abraham. This Greek tense signifies a specific action of God (punctiliar) performed in past time. In this case, it refers to the time of an individual’s conversion to Christ.

Paul uses another important word, **εἶχω** (*echō*), translated “to have.” The word does not carry with it the idea of obtaining or procuring, but of possessing or holding. An interesting textual variant also appears with this word. Some manuscripts have the 1st person plural present *indicative* (**εἰχομεν** - *echomen*) and others have the 1st person plural present *subjunctive* (**εἴχομεν** - *echōmen*). Scholars are divided concerning which is the more probable reading. Considering the first reading cited above to be original, this phrase is a statement of fact meaning, “God has provided his peace for all who are justified by faith.” If the second reading is accepted as original this phrase is an exhortation which is referred to as the hortatory subjunctive. The passage would mean, “Let us continue to live in the peace God provided in our justification by faith.” The hortatory subjunctive does not do away with the importance of the statement of fact, but it emphasizes the exhortation for the reader to continue to live in God’s peace. Neither of these readings negates the message of the other but the emphasis is somewhat different. The basic message remains the same in either instance.

In verse 2 Paul says that our “access to this grace” is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul uses a highly descriptive term which is translated “access.” The word **προσαγωγήν** (*prosaagōgēn*) is a compound word made up of the preposition **προς** (*pros*), referring to a place toward which anything moves or resides and the word **αγω** (*agō*) which means “to lead or bring.” Combined, the resulting word came to have an important meaning, especially in classical Greek. It meant to be formally introduced (brought into) the presence-chamber of a monarch. It is far stronger than a word to describe a roadway or a pathway of access. It means that those justified by God are formally escorted into God’s own presence where he bestows upon them his blessings of “rejoicing in hope, rejoicing even in persecution, and glorifying God.” All of this is accomplished by God and comes to us as his gift of love not from our own achievement. Sanday emphasizes the force of the Greek word by saying, “The rendering ‘access’ is inadequate, as it leaves out of sight the fact that we do not come in our own strength but need an ‘introducer’ – Christ.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 121.) Paul uses the same word in Eph. 2:18 and 3:12. Recognition and acceptance of this was totally humbling for Paul as it must be for all of God’s people.

The expression “into this grace” describes a state of being – one’s new existence. The one justified is now acceptable to God and is the continuing object of God’s favor. Paul says that Christians “stand fast,” or “stand firm” in this state of being. The Greek word is in the present perfect

tense which emphasizes a present condition which resulted from a past action. The sense of the phrase is, “You have been ushered into the throne room of the Monarch of the universe, and you now stand justified in him through your conversion to Christ.”

Verses 3-5 enumerate some of the blessings bestowed by God and affirm the reality of hope because God’s love has been spread abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which he has given to us. Hope does not disappoint us. The Greek word **καταισχυνει** (*kataischuneí*) means “not illusory.” That is, it is not imaginary or simply an illusion. It is real. Once again this takes the word “hope” away from the idea of wish or desire and moves it into expectation which is sure. Through this, Paul emphasizes the assurance of salvation which God’s people possess. There need never be any doubt or wondering about our eternal destiny because the price of sin has been paid by Christ. Our goodness had (or has) nothing to add to our justification by God. Again, this emphasizes the motivation behind one’s obedience to God. How was this accomplished? It came through the love of God which was poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Certainly it is not because of our love for God, which is always inadequate and flawed, but by his love for us as sinners. Paul’s word **εκκεχυται** (*ekkechutei*) refers to a metaphor used in the Middle East referring to the bestowing of spiritual refreshment on a person. It pictured one being overwhelm with abundant amounts of water being poured over them. Possibly this was the idea in Is. 44:3.

Verse 6 tells us that Christ came at the right time to redeem mankind. Much has been said and written concerning the expression, “the fullness of time” in Gal. 4:4. Most of this is based on the conditions present in the first century world such as the failures of paganism, the relative peace through the Roman Empire, transportation and communication facility, etc. The meaning in God’s mind is not clearly stated. All we know is that “when the time was right.” Paul’s emphasis is, “when we were powerless” sinners – Christ died for us.

In verses 7-8 he expands this a little further, comparing the act of God with the act of a human being. In a few very rare circumstances we may see a person willing to die for the sake of a righteous person. Notice Paul’s use of the legal term **δικαιου** (*dikaíou*) referring to a person who is right in the eyes of the law – he is not a violator. Paul continues by saying that perhaps you might find someone who is willing to die for a “good man.” Here he uses the word **αγαθου** (*agathou*). When this word is referring to a person its emphasis is on the individual’s personal goodness, his character, or his moral-ethical excellence. It deals more with the inward character of the man than simply legal conformity or behavior. In contrast to this Paul says, “While we were still sinners Christ died for us.” It was not, “Because we were good people,” or “Because we had good hearts” that Christ did for us. Instead, in the strongest terms Paul declares that it was “while we were yet sinners” that Christ died for us. This demonstrates the depth of God’s love for us. In Gal. 2:22 Paul personalizes this premise by saying, “I live by faith in the Son of God who loved *me* and gave himself up for *me*.” When speaking of the death of Christ he uses the word **υπερ** (*hyper*) meaning “in behalf of.” This word is used in the emphatic position here just as it is in I Cor. 15:1-3 when speaking of Christ’s death. Christ’s sacrificial death was not simply a martyr dying for an important cause; it was the perfection of the atonement designed by the Father in order to bring about man’s reconciliation to God.

Verses 9-11 give a more detailed description of the purpose of Christ's death. In verse 9 Paul restates his affirmation of justification by Christ's blood. The cleansing act of the atonement necessitated the shedding of blood. The Old Testament sacrifices were constant reminders that an animal was involuntarily giving its life for the life of the sinner who made the offering. The blood of Christ was not an "optional" way chosen by God to bring about justification. It was the necessary way, as is also emphasized by the writer of Hebrews 9-10.

Verse 10 uses the expression "If while we were enemies of God we were reconciled . . ." This is a strong expression which, grammatically may be either active or passive. If it is taken as passive, it says we were "hated *by* God." If it is taken as active, it says "we were hostile toward God" or "*we* hated God." Sin was the cause in both of these scenarios. Grammatically the words can be translated either way and there are capable commentators on both sides of the issue. In verse 9 Paul has called attention again to the wrath of God against our sins. Those who take this as a passive statement believe Paul means that because of his justice God could not tolerate sin in his presence throughout eternity. John Murray is representative of those who take the passive view of the passage ("we were hated by God.") He says that "God's holy hostility to and alienation from us" is expressed in this passage and he contends that it took the reconciliation of man to God to remove God's hostility. (Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173.) However, God's hostility is not against mankind but against the sins of mankind. These are the cause of man's alienation of sinful man from the God who loves him. On the other hand, Sanday defends the active interpretation ("we were hostile toward God") and he quotes Lightfoot who said, "It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change, that a reunion may be effected." (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.) Sanday's comment, the active translation of the verb, is in keeping with the context and is certainly the proper interpretation of the passage. God's love is what prompted the sacrifice of Christ.

In verses 9-11 Paul uses the word **καταλλάσσω** (*katallassō*) and its forms three times. In order to see the force of this we must remember that we were reconciled to God; God was not reconciled to us. This word is translated "reconcile or reconciliation." In the New Testament, Paul is the only writer who uses this Greek word. It occurs infrequently but it is still important in Paul's exposition of the meaning of the death of Christ. Other passages where the word is used are Rom. 11:15, I Cor. 7:11, II Cor. 5:18-20, Col. 1:20-22, and Eph. 2:16. Its basic meaning is "to change or to restore to favor." The word "reconcile" comes from this core meaning. Fitzmyer says, "This is but another way of stating that sinners are now at 'peace' with God (5:1) because reconciliation is the restoration of the estranged and alienated person to friendship and intimacy with God (II Cor. 5:18-21)." (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 401.)

The meaning of reconciliation demonstrates two primary facts in the history of salvation. First, is Paul's condemnation of all mankind concerning the seriousness of sin and man's guilt. This was difficult for the Jews to understand (chapters 2-3) and the paganism of the Gentiles had little emphasis on the topics of sin and guilt. Second is the enormous cost incurred in solving the problem of man's guilt *i.e.* justification. The sinner's complete helplessness in solving the problem is difficult for mankind to accept because of his feeling of personal adequacy or self-sufficiency. There is a link between guilt and atonement. This link is one of the greatest obstacles faced by ancient or contemporary evangelists, preachers, and teachers.

In the ancient world as well as contemporary culture sin is usually treated lightly, conversion is seldom viewed as anything more than “joining the church,” – frequently for social reasons – and reconciliation to God is often given little serious consideration. “Good people” are not really thought of as “alienated from God” or “enemies of God” but are considered “good but unchurched.” God took the initiative and answered the challenge of man’s guilt with the painful decision to send his Son to suffer and die in order to give his own “enemies” (human beings) an opportunity to be justified. Paul’s conclusion (verse 11) is that reconciliation, the remaking of the God-man relationship, results in the secure expectation that those who respond in faith to God’s grace will spend eternity in the presence of their Creator. In that hope we can rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin and Redemption – Adam and Christ: 5:12-21

These verses constitute a short but significant break in the flow of Paul’s description of the blessings of salvation by grace yet there is a definite connection to his general argument in the previous chapters. Also these verses are very complex. Paul has been speaking of the peace, hope, and security of justification by grace through faith, but the question naturally arises about the origin of sin and death and their effect on humanity. He has to go back to the one who introduced sin into the world (Adam) in order to see the solution to sin (Christ). This section has many important contrasts – sin and righteousness, Adam and Christ, death and life, condemnation and justification, the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ, the reign of sin and the reign of grace.

There is a definite connection in thought between this block and 3:21-26 although the content is quite different. In both passages sin is dealt with on a personal but also on a universal basis (“all have sinned”) and in both, the moral condition of mankind is discussed in the context of law. In I Cor. 15:22 Paul uses a similar comparison between Adam and Christ; “For as in Adam, all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

In chapters 1-4 Paul has described the sins of the Gentiles and the Jews and he has shown that grace is the only possible solution to the problem. He pictures mankind under two separate and contrasting relationships. Because of the entry of sin into the world, Adam’s descendants became participants with him in sin and death. With the atonement mankind could become a participant with Christ in reconciliation and life. It is important to notice that some commentators consider Adam, and the Genesis story as a whole, to be symbolic rather than historical. That is, there was never a flesh and blood character named Adam who was the first man but the entire account is only symbolic or possibly mythological. On the other hand it is obvious that Paul treats Adam as a historical figure just as he treats Christ as a historical figure. As Adam stood at the beginning of an “Old Age,” (one of sin and death), Christ stands at the beginning of a “New Age (justification and life). Paul personifies sin by speaking of sin “acting” in certain ways. This seems to imply that sin’s controlling power is at work in the human being. With this in mind we can see the state of a fallen human race, *i.e.*, we are living in an earthly environment in which the power of sin is dominant. In short, this section lays down the flow of the consequences of the sin of Adam and the guilt of those who follow his example of disobedience. Adam, sin, alienation, and death are contrasted with Christ, atonement, reconciliation, and life.

Leander Keck adds an important insight to this. He says that the function of 5:12-21 fills in an important gap in Paul's account of these matters thus far. The Gentiles refused to have God in their knowledge (1:18-23) and we see God's response to this (1:24-32). Paul had also shown that the Jews were guilty of the same or similar evils. So Paul has shown *what* the sinners have done, both Gentile and Jew, but he has not shown anything about the origin of sin. This brings up the topic of the history of salvation as it is linked to Christ. It requires the author to deal with three topics: (1) the origin and nature of sin, (2) the effects of the sin of Adam on the human race, and (3) to show how Christ is linked to this. He has made certain statements of benefits accruing to the believer – peace with God, access to this grace, salvation from God's wrath against sin, reconciliation with God, salvation, etc. However, he has not yet explained *how* these benefits actually move from the one event of Christ's death and resurrection to all believers of all time. (Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-147.)

It is primarily from these verses, particularly verse 12, that the Catholic doctrine of inherited original sin is based. This was fully defined in the documents from the Council of Trent which was convened in 1546. A whole group of "anathemas" were pronounced on those who denied the various Catholic dogmas emitting from the Council. (For more information on these decrees see Henry Bettenson, *Document of the Christian Church*, second edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 261-268.)

Commentary

Verse 12 begins with "Therefore," connecting what has been previously said to that which he is about to say. Scholars have debated whether he is referring simply to verse 11, or perhaps verses 1-11. Some contend that Paul is including chapters 1-4 in their entirety. It probably does not make a great deal of difference from an exegetical point of view which of these is intended because the basic message need not be changed. At this point, as apparently in other places, Paul may have intended ambiguity so that a fuller view of his arguments may be seen. He is not trying to inquire into the various ramifications involved in the *origin* of sin or death but he wants to deal with the *consequences* of sin. The origin of sin and death are presupposed from the Genesis story. Paul's conclusion is that the *effects* of Adam's sin are crucial in our understanding the *effects* of Christ's sacrifice. He personifies both sin and death, speaking of them as if they had an existence all their own – sin entered into the world bringing death with it. Of what "death" is Paul speaking, physical or spiritual? Again, there are scholars on both sides of this issue. Some, such as Fitzmyer, believe that both are included. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 412. See also Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.) There is a sort of shared guilt in Paul's statement. Sin entered the world bringing death, but every human being shares in this "because all have sinned" following in the footsteps of Adam. Paul uses the word *διερχομαι* (*dierchomai*) in this phrase which means to "pass through or to pass along." Keck says that Paul uses the expression, *και ουτως* (*kai houtōs*) which literally means "in this way," in order to emphasize the *mechanism* through which death was passed down. However Keck says that Paul is not referring to the *cause* of death but to the mechanism of its transfer to all mankind. (Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 147.)

Death passed along to all men because "all sinned." The expression *εφ ω παντες ημαρτον* (*eph hō pantes ēmarton*) literally means "with the result that all sinned" or "because all sinned." However, we must ask, "In what sense did 'all sin?'" Remember that Paul is not contending that

the guilt of Adam's sin is passed along. He is dealing with the consequence of his sin. Paul uses "death" to include both physical and spiritual death.

In verse 13 Paul leaves his thought, begun in verse 12, and embarks on a different but kindred thought. He has just stated that "all have sinned" but in verse 13 he begins to discuss the link between sin and the law. He lays down five important principles. First, before the law was given sin was in the world. Second, sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Third, even when there was no law, death still reigned from the time of Adam until Moses, *i.e.*, from the beginning of sin until the giving of the Law. Fourth, Adam had a direct command (law) from God, and he violated it thus being guilty of sin and he suffered death, the consequence of his sin. Fifth, death reigned even over those between Adam and Moses who did not violate the law because the law did not come until Moses. Therefore the wrongdoings of mankind between Adam and Moses were not like the sin of Adam. Paul is showing that wrongdoing was not charged against a man as "sin" since there was no "law" to define wrongdoing as "sin."

Paul's statements in verse 13 show that mankind was under the power of sin even when there was no law. Therefore death reigned during that time. We must remember that at Mt. Sinai God not only gave the Law but he also gave Israel a covenant. Violation of the Law was a violation of the covenant because the Law gave certain regulations within the covenant. Thus the covenant played a pivotal role in the definition of sin as well as what constituted rebellion against God. Remember in 3:19-20 Paul says that through the law came the knowledge of sin. With the giving of the law and the covenant, wrongdoing became a *sinful* violation in both the legal sense and the theological sense. From a legal perspective the violation was rebellion against the authority of the law but from the theological perspective the violation was sinful and therefore a violation of the covenant and rebellion against God.

Paul uses the words **αχρι γαρ** (*achri gar*) which means "up until the time." During the time span from Adam until Moses "death reigned" (5:14) and all of the progeny of Adam suffered the consequences of his sin. In addition, Paul says that where there is no law sin was not reckoned (5:13). Here he uses the word **ελλογεται** (*ellogeitai*) which means "to charge to an account or to make an entry into a financial ledger" as would be done in a business transaction. This word is only used twice in the New Testament, here and in Philem. 18. This appears to reflect the Jewish symbolic idea of God's book of accounts of the deeds of an individual. So during the period from Adam to Moses wrongdoings were not charged as "sin" except where God had given specific instructions (law). Instead, God dealt with man's wrongdoings in a different way from violations of his specific commands – violations of his laws. Those violations constituted sins. Paul is certainly speaking specifically about the Law of Moses but he must admit that God had commanded various people at various times to do or not to do certain things prior to the giving of the Law of Moses. The word "law" appears to be used in both a specific way (Law of Moses) and a general way (any commandment of God). Therefore, sin was present and death reigned during that span of time. Augustine, and many theologians who followed him, took Paul's statement to mean that this "reign of death" was the same as the "guilt of sin." However, this conclusion does not follow Paul's line of reasoning. Instead, that position shows a confusion of "guilt of sin" with "consequences of sin."

In verse 14 Paul makes a distinction between those who sinned in the same way as Adam had

sinned (violation of a commandment of God) and those whose wrongdoing was different from Adam's sin, *i.e.* they did wrong, but it was not in reference to a direct command from God. He uses the word **αμαρτια** (*hamartia*), translated "sin" and then speaks of Adam's **παραβασις** (*parabasis*), translated "transgression." Fitzmyer says that there is a distinction between these words and this difference is part of Paul's argument; "The latter [**παραβασις**] is the formal aspect of an evil deed considered as a violation of a law or precept. Adam had been given a precept (Gen. 2:17, 3:17), which he violated. Those who lived in the first (Lawless) period, however, did not do evil as he had done, for they violated no precepts." (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 418.) Fitzmyer uses the expression "the Lawless period" to refer to the period between Adam and the giving of the Law of Moses. During that period there was no written law from God. None of this did away with man's responsibility or accountability with reference to his moral-ethical life simply because there were no direct instructions from God. See also Rom. 2:25-29 which sheds a little light on this principle. Paul gives us (and them) the assurance that all will be judged by a just and merciful God and this fact is a part of his argument. Sanday summarizes this portion by saying, "What St. Paul wishes to bring out is that prior to the giving of the Law [of Moses], the fate of mankind, to an extent and in a way which he does not define, was directly traceable to Adam's Fall." (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 135.) In Jewish non-canonical literature there are various discussions of the effect of Adam's sin and fall but the contemporary doctrine of Adam's *guilt* being passed on to his progeny was not the focus of those writings. Instead, they had a great deal to say about the *consequences* of his sin.

In verses 14-21 Paul speaks of Adam as a **τυπος** (*tupos*), type of Christ. This method of type-antitype is very familiar in the book of Hebrews. Although this device is usually used to show parallels, as the author of Hebrews uses it, Paul uses it here to show opposites. The effect of Adam's deed (sin) was destructive but the effect of Christ's deed (atonement) was redemptive. The comparison depicts Adam as the head of humanity in sin contrasted with Christ as the head of humanity in redemption. Our author calls attention to the contrast by saying that the gift is not like the trespass. He uses the word **παραπτωμα** (*paraptōma*) which means "a false step, a lapse, or a slipping away." Most English versions translate this as "offense, transgression, or trespass." Notice Paul's use of the word **πολυς** (*polus*), "many." He uses this word to identify those who "die" as a result of Adam's sin and also to identify those who "receive God's gift of grace." The redemption of "many" provided by Christ only comes to those who *voluntarily* respond to his atonement just as the "death" of which Paul speaks in this context comes only to those who *voluntarily* follow Adam's example of disobedience. This verse does not support the doctrine of hereditary guilt of Adam's sin as has been supposed by many, both Catholic and Protestant. Instead, it emphasizes the entry of sin and its consequences coming to those who *voluntarily* follow Adam's example of disobedience. The latter part of verse 15 emphasizes this. (Also, see comments on verse 18 below.)

Various words are used by Paul in verses 15-19 to compare the sinful act of Adam and the redemptive act of Christ. These are amplified when Paul gives the consequences of Adam's sin in comparison with the consequences of Christ's sacrifice. Notice the contrast. Adam's act is referred to as a **παραπτωμα** (*paraptōma*), "trespass," v. 15, as a **αμαρτανω** (*hamartanō*), "to sin," v. 16, and as **παρακουω** (*paradouō*), "to disobey," v. 19. The consequences of his action are listed as "many died," v. 15, "judgment," v. 16, "condemnation," v. 16, "death reigned," v. 17, and "many were made sinners," v. 19. Christ's redemptive act brought "the gift that came by

grace,” v. 15, “justification,” vs. 16, “righteousness reigned in life,” vs. 17, and “many were made righteous,” vs. 19. Paul’s point is that the spiritual loss which came from Adam’s sinful act has been regained through Christ’s redemptive act of atonement. Verses 16-17 have another contrast. God’s judgment and condemnation followed one sin but Christ’s gift came because of (followed) many trespasses. “Death reigned” through Adam but the abundance of “God’s gift of righteousness” reigned through grace which was mediated through Jesus Christ.

Verse 18 speaks of the condemnation which came to all men through Adam’s sin. Notice that Paul says this came to *all* men. There were no conditions laid out here but the blanket statement that all men received this condemnation. At first, this seems to imply inherited guilt, but the remainder of the statement sheds additional light on the subject. “So also the result of the act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.” The justification of “all men” was conditioned on their action in response to the atonement of Christ. So also, the guilt and consequent alienation of “all men” was conditioned upon their following Adam’s example of disobedience. If the condemnation was universally and unconditionally transmitted as inherited guilt, then the atonement of Christ on the cross was likewise universally and unconditionally transmitted as justification because Paul uses identical expressions to describe both of these events.

In verse 19 Paul restates the same principle but in a slightly different way. “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” In each of these statements Paul uses the word **καθιστημι** (*kathistēmi*) meaning “to place or set, to appoint, to constitute, or to cause to be.” Therefore “the *many* were made sinners” has the same breadth of application as “the *many* will be made righteous.” Paul is not showing universal salvation. Instead, he is showing that all those who became followers of Adam (those who acted out of their own freewill and thus became sinners) are condemned because of their own actions. On the other hand, all those who became followers of Christ (those who acted out of their own free will by accepting the atonement) are justified by God’s gift of grace.

In verses 20-21 Paul summarizes the effects of all of this. He does so by listing four conclusions. First, the law pinpointed the true character of all wrongdoing by showing that it was **παράπτωμα** (*paraptōma*), that is, “violation, offense or trespass.” Paul uses **αμαρτανω** (*hamartanō*), translated “sin” in the latter part of verse 20 and again in verse 21. Second, as sin increased the grace of God increased even more. Third, sin reigned in death but grace reigns through righteousness to bring eternal life. Fourth, eternal life comes through Jesus Christ. In this, statement there is an unspoken truth which is important. Eternal life comes through the atonement of Christ, not through the works of any law or man’s own personal achievement of goodness.

Chapter VIII

The New Life and the Struggle Against Sin

Rom. 6:1—7:25

Newness of Life: 6:1-14

Paul has shown how God's grace, demonstrated in Christ's atonement, results in justification, peace, security, and hope. His logic and his theology are firmly based on God's promises to Abraham and to Israel that "all of the families of the earth" would be the beneficiaries of the seed of Abraham. There can be little doubt that the Jewish Christians had a difficult time coming to grips with this truth. For the most part, they had misunderstood God's plan for their own nation as well as his plan for all mankind. The fact that Paul had shared their misunderstandings in his early life gave him certain creditability and the advantage of knowing the reasons for their objections. In chapter 6, as in previous passages, his use of the diatribe illustrates how he anticipated their response. Although not specifically stated, he could have said, "I've been there and done that." Chapters 6 and 7 give us some insight into what may have been going in Paul's mind.

Chapters 2-5 (particularly 5:20-21) are certain to have raised questions in the minds of the Jewish Christians. These recipients appear to have had two related questions in mind. "In view of the fact that sin no longer reigns supreme, having been conquered by grace, does this mean that there is no longer any penalty for sin?" and "Does this mean that sin has lost its grip on those who are justified by faith?" These related questions may seem remote to us but they were very real to the Jewish Christians to whom Paul was writing.

The question which Paul anticipates is, "Does salvation by grace imply that 'more sin means more grace?'" If that is true, then sin could be seen as a means of displaying the great act of God's grace and it could actually become an indirect means of "glorifying" God. This is similar to 3:5-8, "Let us do evil that good may come." The question posed in 6:1 may have been evoked by 5:20 where Paul said, "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more." From a strictly logical viewpoint this is a reasonable conclusion but Paul shows that there is a more fundamental principle involved, *i.e.*, one's new life in Christ and his new relationship to God.

Commentary

In verse 1 he uses the Greek word *ἐπιμενῶμεν* (*epimenōmen*) which is generally translated "to continue, persist, or to go on." It is in the present subjunctive which emphasizes the continued persistence or one's determination to continue in an undertaking. It is not an ethical word and it may refer to either good or bad pursuits. The phrase *ἐπιμενῶμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ* (*epimenōmen tē hamartia*) translated "continue in sin" could also carry the idea of "persist in a state of sin," "persist in sinful action," or to "remain in the sphere of sin." See 3:9 and 11:22 where similar uses of *ἐπιμενῶμεν* occur with the obvious meaning of "continuing in a state of being." (See James G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans*, David A Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, General Editors, (Dallas: Word Book Publishers, 1988), on CD.) Paul treats this objection as an absurdity but he does not dismiss it. Instead, he gives an important answer.

The fundamental doctrine of salvation by grace through faith was described in chapters 2-5. Now, Paul follows this with a second fundamental principle, *i.e.* the doctrine of the new life in Christ. Again he uses the emphatic negative statement which he used in 3:4, **μη γενοιτο** (*mē ginoito*), “by no means, absolutely not under any circumstances.” (See commentary on 3:4.) His answer shows the complete inconsistency for a “follower of Christ” to be living a life of sin. It is inconceivable that one who has entered into this new relationship with God would even think of continuing a life of sin. Grace is not a license to sin but a source of profound gratitude which motivates the believer to express his thanksgiving by the “newness of life.” Paul’s basic answer is in the form of another question. “How can we who have died to sin continue to live in sin?” The death to sin was followed by a resurrection to a new life, symbolized by Christ’s vicarious death and his resurrection. Just as Christ was buried following his death, so baptism is a symbolic burial. Christ’s resurrection is symbolized in the baptized sinner rising from baptism to walk a new life. Paul’s primary argument is that Christ’s death and resurrection brought an end to sin’s “reign of death.”

Verses 3-4 present two important truths concerning the Biblical doctrine of baptism. First, baptism is “into union with Christ” and second, baptism is “into a relationship with the death of Christ” where his blood was shed. These are dynamically related but they are not identical. Although baptism is an act of obedience to Christ, the importance of obedience is not the purpose of Paul’s statement. Instead, he is speaking of the creation of a new relationship with God which is made possible by Christ’s death and resurrection. That, according to 6:3, takes place when one is “baptized *into* Christ.”

In verse 3 Paul begins by asking the rhetorical question, “Do you not know?” Although his topic is the sinner’s death to sin through God’s grace, he shows how baptism is an important part of this picture. He describes the symbolism of baptism as **συνεταφημεν** (*sunetaphēmen*) meaning “to be buried together or buried with.” The aorist tense used here makes the act very specific. The symbolism which Paul follows in the passage is that Christ died, was buried, and raised. In like manner the sinner dies to sin, is buried with Christ in baptism, and is raised to newness of life. There can be no doubt that the burial of which Paul speaks is symbolized by the immersion in baptism.

We must keep in mind the basic thesis of this passage or we will fail to see the important links which Paul presents. His thesis is that the sinner dies to sin through the sacrifice of Christ and is raised with Christ into a new life. He links baptism to this process in two ways. First by showing that baptism is the culminating act which brings us into union with Christ and second by showing that just as Christ’s victory was declared in the resurrection to a new life, so also the sinner’s death to sin and his burial with Christ in baptism is celebrated in his resurrection to newness of life. Although the symbolism of baptism is vividly demonstrated in immersion (a burial) Paul is not attempting to give us a lesson on the mode of baptism. Instead, he is dealing with meaning and significance of baptism and its link to the “newness of life.” However, since the Greeks commonly used the word **βαπτίζω** (*baptizō*) to mean “plunge, immerse, dip, of to dye a garment” this would have been a meaningful symbol to them.

The Greek word **εις** (*eis*), which occurs in verses 3-4, is translated “into.” A great deal has been written and debated about the meaning of this word. It can have a variety of meanings but its

translation depends on the particular occurrence of the word and the object in view. For example, in some contexts the word can mean “in the direction of, in reference to, against, or upon.” However, the word generally means “in, into, unto, in order to, and for the purpose of.” A basic root idea in the word is that it is prospective rather than retrospective in its outlook. That is, it basically looks forward rather than backward. It is used more than one thousand seven hundred times in the New Testament and its meaning in some of these instances is a bit remote. Some of the more remote meanings are “against, coming down upon, go in, with respect to, and with reference to.” See Arndt and Gingrich, *The Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* for an extensive discussion of the various uses of this word. See also I Cor. 10:2 and Gal. 3:27 where the word is used with the same intent as Rom. 6:5. English translations are completely consistent with the translation “into” in this passage.

The context in which the word **εις** (*eis*) occurs is of great importance in understanding its meaning in a particular phrase. William Sanday says that the Greek phrase, “we were baptized into Christ” literally means we “‘were baptized into union with’ (not merely ‘obedience to’) Christ.” The act of baptism was an act of *incorporation* into Christ. . . . This conception lies at the root of the whole passage. All of the consequences which St. Paul draws follow from this union, incorporation, identification of the Christian with Christ.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 156.) Paul is speaking of the new relationship with God and the newness of life. How did this relationship come about? He says it was culminated in the act of baptism “into union with Christ” and “into Christ’s death.” The penitent believer dies *to* sin as Christ died *for* sin. As Christ was raised to a new life so also the baptized person is raised to a new life.

In Acts 2:38 and Matt. 26:28 we see an identical Greek phrase, **εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων** (*eis aphesis hamartiōn*). This phrase is universally translated “for forgiveness [remission] of sins.” In Acts 2:38 we have Peter’s response to the question from the crowd on Pentecost, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” His answer was “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins*” (**εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων** – *eis aphesis hamartiōn*). In Matt. 26:28 Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. He took the cup and offered thanks and passed it to the disciples saying, “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many *for the remission of sins*” (**εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων** – *eis aphesis hamartiōn*). Jesus said that his blood was poured out “for the remission of sins,” and Peter said that our repentance and baptism are “for the remission of sin.” The phrase has the same meaning in both cases.

Verse 5 emphasizes these ideas. Paul says we are **συνφυτοι** (*sumphutoi*) – “united” with him. This word also means to “plant together” (KJV). Sanday says, “The word exactly expresses the process by which a graft becomes united with the life of a tree. So the Christian becomes ‘grafted into’ Christ.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.* p. 156.) Paul’s emphasis is that a true union of the sinner with Christ has just taken place. The resurrection from the water completes the symbolism showing the beginning of the new life in Christ. Everett Ferguson has written the most comprehensive treatment of baptism available today. (Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009). This 900 page book has been acclaimed by scholars of all faiths as a “monumental contribution” to the study of baptism in Scripture and for the first five centuries of Christianity.

In verse 6 Paul uses some of his favorite expressions. Our old self was crucified with Christ, the body of sin has been discarded, and we are no longer the slaves of sin. The reason? It is because we have died to sin with its enslaving power. Here, Paul uses the word **καταργηθῇ** (*katargēthē*) which means “to render something useless, unproductive, or powerless.” Therefore sin can no longer exercise its power over us. Those who have died to sin have been freed from sin. In this, Paul again ties baptism to forgiveness.

In verse 7 he says that the one who has died (to sin) has been **δεδικαιώται** (*dedikaiōtai*), “has been justified (freed)” from sin. This is in the perfect tense, indicating the continuing result of a past deed. By using the passive voice he shows that this was not a meritorious act of the sinner (salvation by works) but an act (work) of God. The message is that when one is baptized into Christ’s death the reign of death has ceased for that person. Death is no longer the inevitable penalty because the sinner has been delivered from eternal death through Christ. However, as we will see in chapter 7 sin has not lost its power to dwell in an individual. Every person still has the battle within himself.

Unfortunately this process has been characterized as “steps in the plan of salvation.” This does not capture Paul’s picture. Paul is viewing this process as a whole not as “steps.” This is particularly noted in his view of one’s death to sin. If we view this as “steps” the symbolism gives a confusing picture because Paul’s symbolism presents the death to sin taking place before the burial in baptism. Death to sin, burial in baptism and resurrection to a new life are merged so that the entire process is pictured as a person becoming united with Christ. This does not detract from the necessity of baptism “for remission of sins” but views it as an essential part of the picture of the new birth.

Verses 8-14 give a further explanation of these blessings and additional observations. The new “self” – the new “body” – is no longer identified with Adam, but with Christ. Paul frequently uses “body” to describe the whole person as in 12:1. Since we died with Christ we will also live with him. Is Paul speaking of the Christian life or is he referring to eternal life? He uses the terms life and death in alternate ways, sometime speaking of physical life and at other times speaking of spiritual or eternal life. It is not always easy to follow his thoughts. In this case, both interpretations carry a valid thought. Christ, having died once will die no more. The Christian in like manner, having died to sin will not die again but he lives in the expectation of eternal life. Although there are important similarities here, this is not an absolute application. Christ cannot be overtaken by sin but we can. Paul’s motive is not to say that Christians cannot fall away, but to emphasize the freedom into which Christ has introduced us. We still have freewill and we can once again yield to sin.

Verses 11-14 strongly emphasize the new relationship and its responsibilities. Our writer says that we should count ourselves alive to God in Christ. Notice that he reinforces this by admonishing his readers not to present their bodies as tools (instruments) of sin but to offer themselves to God in gratitude for his gift of life. Verse 14 gives the motivation behind one’s obedience; “Because you are not under law but under grace.” Sin is no longer our master and we are not to allow it to rule us. The purpose behind a Christian’s obedience is his gratitude for God’s grace, not one’s obligation to conform to law. This is one of the most difficult things for Christians to

learn. Obedience is not to be primarily motivated by our desire “to go to heaven” (that is “me-centered”) or just because “it is commanded that I do certain things” (that is law-centered). Instead, our motivation needs to be our profound expression of gratitude in response to God’s gift of the atoning sacrifice of Christ (that is God-centered).

Slaves of Righteousness: 6:15-23

At first, we would think that release from slavery meant emancipation and freedom. However, in this block Paul will show that the process is not emancipation in the popular sense of the word, but the transfer of a slave from one master to another. In this there are certain elements of freedom which are very important, but this emancipation is not license to live as one pleases.

Verses 15 presents an important question. “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” In some ways this is a restatement of 6:1. Grace is not a substitute for obedience. Instead, as Paul has already emphasized, grace lifts one’s motivation to a new and higher level. This is characterized by gratitude and service. Slavery in Paul’s day was quite different from the contemporary concept. Some slaves were highly educated professional people – physicians, educators, etc. and in some cases men would sell themselves into slavery for the sake of personal security. This was especially true in urban areas. This did not lessen the demands for obedience, but it emphasizes the voluntary slavery aspect of some practices in the Roman world. This appears to be what Paul has in mind. Paul’s thrust in this paragraph is not so much the bondage of slavery but the necessity of service. (See Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 448-449. See also the excellent article, “Slavery in the New Testament” by S. Scott Bartchy in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, on CD.) As we have stated above, freedom in Christ does not mean license to live as one pleases.

Paul’s use of the slave imagery leads to a fitting conclusion in verses 16-18. You were the slaves of sin, and were therefore bound to suffer the consequent death brought on by sin, but now you are voluntarily the slaves of a new master, Jesus Christ. In his description of this Paul uses the expression, **τυπον διδαχης** (*tupon didachēs*) which is generally translated “form of teaching [doctrine].” The word **τυπον** recalls the principle of “type and antitype” particularly seen in the book of Hebrews. Paul used this word in 5:14 where he is speaking of Adam and Christ. The word means “a form or pattern, a tracing or image, or a model.” (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 837.) Paul is showing that the atonement of Christ as contained in the gospel message was wholeheartedly accepted by his recipients and their burial in baptism and consequent resurrection to newness of life symbolized the sacrifice of Christ. Concerning this transferring of slaves from one owner to another, Fitzmyer says, “The allusion would be to the custom in the Hellenistic world by which the transfer of slaves was often accomplished with their consent.” (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 449.) Verse 18 states that we are now free from the servitude of sin and are servants of righteousness.

In verses 19-23 Paul says he will speak in human terms, *i.e.*, he is going to use a common analogy so that they can see the application in their own setting. He is doing this because of their weakness, probably referring to their lack of basic understanding of the nature of the gospel. The writer of Hebrews appears to be doing the same thing in his comparison of the priesthood of Melchizedek and Christ (Heb. 5:11ff). With this brief explanation Paul speaks of the demands of Christian liberty and the obligations of Christian servitude. Your ethical-moral conduct as a

slave gives testimony concerning the master to whom you belong. In times past your “testimony” was one of impurity and wickedness. Now, it is to be the testimony of righteousness which leads to holiness (sanctification). Paul uses two words which fitly describe the paganism of his day. He describes it as **ακαθαρσία και τη ανομία** (*akatharsia kai tē anomia*). The first word in this phrase, **ακαθαρσία**, is variously translated as “uncleanness or impurity” and “iniquity, wickedness, or lawlessness.” It is the negative of **καθαρός** (*katharos*), “that which is clean or pure.” It is the Greek word from which the English word “catharsis” is derived. This word means “that which purges or purifies.” By using this word Paul emphasizes that a lifestyle of sin is saturated with moral filth which was characteristic of the paganism from which many of the Gentile converts came. His other word, **ανομία** (*nomia*), is the negative of **νόμος** (*nomos*), “a rule or law.” So Paul says that the lifestyle of sin is made up of immoral and unethical “filth” and also “lawlessness.” By using these words Paul emphasizes that the “newness of life” to which they had been raised is the complete opposite to the lifestyle dominated by sin.

Verse 22 brings out the contrast which Paul seeks to describe. The newness of life is characterized by **αγιασμόν** (*hagiasmon*) translated “holiness or sanctification.” To the original recipients this contrast would have been vivid. The old lifestyle of sin leads to death but the life of holiness leads to eternal life (6:23).

An Illustration: 7:1-6

Because of the chapter break at the end of chapter six the train of thought is sometimes lost. Having stated the contrasting principles of sin and death with holiness and life, Paul now illustrates the idea. In verses 1-3 he speaks to his recipients as “those who know the law” referring primarily to the Jews’ knowledge of the Law of Moses. A few commentators believe Paul is speaking of the Roman law but this is very unlikely since the context does not support it. He uses a line of reasoning known as the syllogism which consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion drawn from the validity of each of those statements. Paul’s major premise is that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives. This is an obvious fact upon which all would agree. He follows this with his minor premise which is that under the law, a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. The conclusion is that upon the death of the husband the woman is released from the law which bound her to her husband. Paul’s focus in this illustration is on the woman who is bound and then released. An observation which he makes is important in his argument, *i.e.*, that by virtue of the husband’s death the woman is free to remarry. The expression “the law of her husband” appears, in this context, to refer to the obligations of the wife to the husband provided by the law. Although the NIV says she is “released from the law of marriage,” the Greek text uses the word **ανδρός** (*andros*) which is the common word for “husband.” The most commonly used words for marriage and to marry are **γάμος** (*gamos*) and **γαμέω** (*gameō*), neither of which occur in this verse.

In verse 4 Paul makes his application with reference to his present topic concerning the law. Some commentators treat this illustration (7:1-6) as an allegory and attempt to identify each element with a corresponding reality. These commentators attempt to make the husband correspond to the law and the wife corresponds to the believer. The death of the husband is the death of the law, and the remarriage of the woman is our union to Christ. This means that we (believers) were married to the law as the woman was married to her husband but the death of the husband

(the law) must occur in order for the woman (believer) to remarry (be joined to Jesus Christ). However, Paul does not say that the *law* had died thereby releasing *us* from its jurisdiction, but that *we* (the Jewish Christians) *died to the law*. The basic mistake in the allegorical interpretation is the attempt to take a simple illustration and treat it as an allegory. This is an illustration, not an allegory and Paul identifies those to whom he is speaking in 7:1, “those who know the law,” the Jewish Christians rather than the Gentiles. Paul’s aim is to show that the Jewish Christians have become dead to the law (separated) through the sacrifice of Christ and therefore they are not bound by it. With this in view, they are free to be joined to Christ. His point is that the death and resurrection of Christ freed the Jews from the law and now they are bound to Christ so they can “bring forth fruit unto God.” (See Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-177, Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-176, and Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-247.)

The Struggle Against Sin: 7:7-25.

This block of text has stirred much debate among scholars. It revolves around the question of whether Paul is speaking of his present struggle with sin (as a Christian) or his past pre-Christian struggle as he was striving to keep the law by being a zealous Pharisee. In addition, scholars also debate whether he is speaking of himself personally or is he speaking for the all mankind as a whole? Throughout Christian history these questions have been discussed. The early Greek Fathers held to the idea that Paul was speaking of mankind’s unregenerate state of sin. However, Augustine believed that Paul was speaking of every Christian’s struggle with the power of sin. Much of Western Christianity followed Augustine’s conclusions up until the Middle Ages. Luther and other Reformers took Augustine’s position and it was especially strong in Calvinism. During the seventeenth century the discussion was very lively. Pietism, with its emphasis on Christian morality and ethics, was gaining strength at that time and was promoting the belief that Christians should rise above such severe struggles with sin. Therefore they believed that Paul was speaking of his pre-Christian experiences. The controversy continues among contemporary New Testament scholars.

In this block we have Paul’s discussion of the function of the law, not as he described it in Gal. 3 but as he sees God’s commandments at work in his own personal experience. In verse 5 Paul uses the word “flesh” in a theological sense. He has used it to identify “the stuff of which we are made” but now his emphasis is to describe the sinful status of the unregenerate man. However, the term is also used to describe the power of sin at work in Christians. With the possible exception of 6:19 this is the first time in the book of Romans that he uses the word in this moral-ethical sense. He is not saying that the human body of flesh is evil in and of itself but he refers to the way that sin can step in and control the desires of the body. John Murray expresses it in this way: “‘Flesh’ in this ethically depreciatory sense means ‘human nature as controlled and directed by sin.’ It is not because the word ‘flesh’ of itself denotes what is bad or connotes badness.” (Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 244.) In 7:7-25 Paul describes the desires (lust) of the flesh and the struggles which all people have with sin. When he uses the word “flesh” he is usually thinking of its ethical-moral connotation and applies it to all people whether non-Christian or Christian. In this way he describes the weaker aspects of humankind as each of us faces temptation. This does not imply inherited sin but it addresses the desires which are common to mankind and are sometimes uncontrolled. See chapter II for additional information on this word.

The Greek phrase **ἐν τῇ σαρκί** (*en tē sarki*) literally means “in the flesh.” Unfortunately in the NIV this is usually translated “sinful nature” when it is linked to evil. (In 6:19, the NIV translates it “natural selves” because the writer is referring to the human body.) We should notice that neither of these is a translation of the phrase but each is the interpretation by the translators. This appears to be influenced by Calvinism which teaches that the sin of Adam brought inherited total depravity into the entire human race. However Paul is not using the term in this way. Instead, he is speaking of every man’s struggle against sin, whether Christian or non-Christian, and he includes himself in this struggle (7:7-25). He frequently contrasts life “in the flesh” with life “in the Spirit.” In Gal. 5:19-26 he shows how Christians can engage in the evils of the flesh, referring to these as “the works of the flesh,” and he contrasts them with the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Commentary

Verse 7 presents another diatribe as Paul pictures the Jews raising an objection to his argument. Since he has said, “you have become dead to the law,” the thought would naturally arise, “Paul, you have said that sin is defined by the law and that if there is no law there can be no sin (for sin is a violation of the law). It would appear then that the law itself is really evil (sin).” This is a continuation of his illustration in verses 1-6. Admittedly sin and the law have been closely associated. Paul has shown that it was because of the law’s definition of wrongdoing as sin that the law brought its destruction. No devout Jew would actually take the position that the law is sin, but Paul introduces this because his line of argument might appear to move logically toward that conclusion. Read 3:19-20 and 5:20-21 again and see how the original readers might have thought that Paul was concluding this. His response to this is his strong negative, “No, not under any circumstances – God forbid such a thought.” Paul shows his profound respect for the law by saying that he would not have known sin except for the law. This carries both a positive and negative thought. Viewed positively, the law served as a warning by disclosing sin. However, viewed negatively, the law condemned violators – law cannot forgive, it only defines right and wrong. The law showed wrongdoing to be sin, a violation of God’s commands. To illustrate his point he selects a very important commandment among the Ten. It is significant that coveting (greed) was his choice here because this is primarily an act of the mind.

In verse 8 he personifies sin again, treating it as an actor on the stage of history and in his own personal life. In this discussion he will also personify law, commandment, covetousness, and death. The word **ἀφορμή** (*aphormē*), which is translated “finding opportunity or finding occasion,” was used by the ancient Greeks as a military term meaning “the base of operations.” By personifying sin in this passage he shows how sin uses the law as its base of operation bringing death to the violators. (He uses the same expression in verse 11.) “Sin” used the commandment, “Do not covet” to challenge Paul. It is significant that the word translated “covet” is **ἐπιθυμία** (*epithumia*), which means “a very strong desire.” Although it is not an ethical-moral word, when it refers to an evil desire it is ordinarily translated “lust.” In this challenge, the desire (lust) was stimulated even further resulting in all kinds of covetousness. Sin has a way of enticing us just as Adam and Eve were enticed to eat the forbidden fruit, thinking that they would find the rewards promised by Satan. However, they were violating God’s commandment which brought death. So Paul says that the law forbade coveting, thus elevating it from simple “wrongdoing” to the position of “sin.” When coveting became sin (through the law), it had the power to bring death. Had there been no law against coveting there could be no “sin” of coveting. Paul shows

the effect which this had on him by saying, *ἡ αμαρτία δια της εντολης* (*hē hamartia dia tēs entolēs*), “sin, by means of the commandment” worked in me every kind of coveting. In this he recognized the power of sin to challenge and lure us into further disobedience.

In verses 9-10 Paul could see himself “alive apart from the law” because he would not have perceived his wrongdoing as sin (3:19-20). Sin was always there but it had no life – it was powerless – that is, until the law came. When the law came and defined wrongdoing as “sin,” sin sprang to life (revived) and Paul saw that he was condemned to death for his violations – “I died.” This “death” was not “death to the law” but the condemnation of death brought on by violation of God’s commandment. His “wrongdoing” now had a much more profound meaning and consequence. His action was rebellion against God because it was a violation of God’s commandment. God’s design for the law was that it would be a guide (discipline) for his people, thus bringing abundant blessings to those who observed it. Instead, because of Israel’s (and Paul’s) disobedience, death, the penalty of sin, became apparent. Apart from the law, sin is dead, *i.e.* it has no power but with the law it brings death.

In verse 11 Paul says that “sin deceived me” just as sin deceived Adam. Deceit is the only tool in the Devil’s tool box. All temptation and sin finally come down to one’s assigning the wrong value to an act and to its “reward.” This is the core meaning of deceit – believing that a certain value exists when, in fact, that value does not exist. In Adam’s case the attractions described by Satan were not true (not real) although it is evident that Adam believed them to be true (real). In Paul’s case Satan showed him the “rewards” of coveting and Paul yielded. This brings up the question of a person yielding to a temptation, knowing all the while that the act he is about to commit is sinful. Is he deceived? The answer is always “Yes.” Look at Paul’s description of himself and his action. He fought against the temptation because he knew that coveting was sinful. Yet he went ahead and coveted. He was deceived because he basically said, “The ‘reward’ of coveting is worth taking the chance.” The truth about this matter is that the “reward” was *not* worth taking the chance. He had placed the wrong value on “the reward” which Satan promised. The value of that “reward” did not exist and this is the essence of deceit. At that moment, Paul considered it “worth while” to fulfill his own desire rather than to obey God’s commandment. This is the reason that in verse 24 he said, “What a wretched man I am.” He, just as Adam, was deceived into placing the wrong value on the “rewards” Satan promised. The truth was that the “wages of sin is death.” In this whole process which Paul describes, the fault was not with God’s law but with Paul’s action. The law only defined his wrongdoing as sin but Paul was deceived into thinking that the “rewards” of Satan’s lies were, for the moment, more valuable than the rewards of God’s truth.

Paul is showing his addressees that many Jews had misunderstood the purpose of the law as he had described in 3:19-20. Murray expresses it in this way: “The purpose of the law in man’s original estate was not to give occasion to sin but to direct and regulate man’s life in the path of righteousness and, therefore, to guard and promote life. By reason of sin, however, that same law promotes death, in that it gives occasion to sin. And the wages of sin is death.” (Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 252.) Therefore Paul’s conclusion in verse 12 is that “the law is holy and the commandment is, holy righteous, and good.” He does not discard the law. Instead, he defends its validity and function when its purpose is properly understood. Verse 13 forms a natural introduction to his next installment in this scenario, *i.e.*, the recitation of his own personal battle with

sin. As this is discussed, keep in mind the meaning of deceit.

Paul's personal experience is his best illustration. Remember, he is still discussing the "newness of life" which he first mentioned in 6:1-4. In 7:14-25 he is not reverting to his old pre-Christian days but he is trying to show that one's struggle against sin continues and the battle against it in his own life is a real struggle. Conversion does not make us immune to sin nor does it remove us from the struggles against temptation. See also I Cor. 9:27 where he affirms the same thing.

In verses 14-20 Paul gives us his own experience and in verses 21-25 he gives us the results of this and his own observations. He begins by saying that the law is spiritual but he is carnal. The word "unspiritual" is used in the NIV but again this is not a translation but an interpretation of the translators. Paul uses the word **πνευματικός** (*pneumatikos*) which means "spiritual" when he speaks of the law. That is, the law is God-given not earthly or of human origin. When he speaks of himself he uses the word **σαρκικός** (*sarkikos*), "pertaining to flesh, human, material, or carnal." It may be used to describe a contrast between that which pertains to the human flesh and that which does not. Paul uses the word to describe the power of sin over an individual. Therefore in Gal. 5:19 he speaks of the "works of the flesh" which the NIV translates "the acts of the sinful nature." By using the words "sinful nature" the text sound like there is something inherently evil about the "flesh" but the various contexts in which the word occurs clearly show that this is not Paul's message. Sin exerts power over our thoughts and deeds and Paul's message is that we are therefore in a constant struggle against sin. He is not saying that there is any sort of inherited guilt involved in this or that the body of flesh is basically evil.

Paul's message is that there is a great contrast between the law (originated from God) and the human being who is struggling with the power of sin in the world and in himself. Since we live in a world impacted by sin, temptation is always with us, deceiving us, and entrapping us. Our writer pictures himself in a great battle which is going on within him. Some describe it as if there were two different people living in him, one which wants to obey God (his better self) and one which wants to follow the evils of coveting (his worse self). However, this does not give a completely accurate picture. True, the idea of "the better self" and "the worse self" appear in the passage but the "worse self" is really Paul's own weakness. This is the essence of his story. He describes this war, but he introduces the scenario by saying that he does not understand (know) why he does these things. It is not simply a battle between two opposing desires – one "the good self" and other "the worse self" – as much as it is a battle between his deep desire to do good which is warring against his own weaknesses (not a "different self") in accomplishing this good which he desires to do. The "old man" of sin has been done away and that is not the problem. The problem is Paul's own weakness with which he struggles daily. The new man is fighting against the weaknesses of "the new man."

He uses the word **θελω** (*thelō*), which means "to exercise the will, to be willing or be inclined toward or disposed toward something, or to wish." Sometimes he loses the battle against evil but this does not come because the evil man is still living but because his reborn self still has its weaknesses. This is evidence of the continued presence of sin which sometimes dominates his behavior. He says, "I do not do what I want to do (what I will to do) but instead, I do what I hate to do. The word **μισέω** (*miseō*) is translated "hate or detest, or abhor." It is in the present tense indicating continual action. This is a strong word used by Jesus in Matt. 5:43-44, 6:24, and

elsewhere. Here the apostle acknowledges the power of sin which is still living in him. He has this war going on within himself and the struggle is constantly present.

This also serves as a reminder that there are many good things in the world which can be slightly perverted to become evil. Paul acknowledges that yielding to the temptations makes him a slave of sin even though he is a regenerated believer. This thought is abhorrent to him. Jesus makes some similar statements in Jn. 8:34-36. Paul spoke of this enslavement in Rom. 2:5-11, 6:16-20 just as he describes here in 7:14. He speaks of himself as “sold to sin.” He uses the word *πεπραμμενος* (*pepramenos*), which is a perfect passive participle. This means that it indicates a past action which continues into the present time. The word means “to be sold, or to be sold as a slave.” Paul says that his present struggles with temptations sometime result in his yielding to their allurements. There is due to his own spiritual weakness which induces him to do wrong. When he yields to sin he become (and continues to be) a slave of sin in spite of the fact that he is a believer. At the same time this attests to the fact that the law is good, just, and holy. His explanation of this is that the law is not evil; it is Paul who is evil. It is not his “better self” which is controlling him but, in his weakness, he is overcome by the power of sin which is still living in him. He wants to do what is good but he is weak and he fails to achieve that good.

There is a great disparity between one’s intentions and one’s actions. He is not discussing one’s *attitude* toward a deed, but he is discussing *the deed itself*. The problem is that his *actions* regarding a deed do not coincide with his *attitudes* regarding the deed. It is as if he were asking the question, “Why do I do these things which I know are sinful even when, as a follower of Christ, I do not approve of them or want to do them?” When commenting on this Leander Keck says, “For Paul, the problem is neither ignorance of the good nor lack of will to do it, but the inability to do the willed good that is known through the law. In other words, he rejects the already ancient Greek view that knowledge of the good leads to doing the good.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 188.) In this, Paul is acknowledging that he lives in a state of personal and spiritual contradiction which is obviously very painful for him.

All of this leads to a group of observations. First, the law is holy, righteous, and good. For him to fall under its condemnation is not the fault or unfairness of the law. Second, his own disobedience to the law is evidence that sin is still dwelling in him and it is exercising power over him. This is the contradiction in which he lives – he wills to do good but he actually does evil. This is the meaning of being “sold as a slave of sin.” Notice how he uses this idea in 6:16: “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey.” This also shows that the sin residing in him is leading him into this evil action. However, this fact does not relieve him of his personal accountability. Third, in verse 18 he says, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh.” At first glance this sounds like Paul is saying that the body of flesh is evil in itself – the doctrine of total depravity and later the teachings of the Gnostics. However, that is not the true sense of the statement and it does not fit the context. Instead of translating this, “nothing good lives in me,” or “I know that nothing good dwells within me,” the phrase can also be translated, “Good does not dwell within me.” (See Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-189.) When viewed in this way, we hear Paul saying that good is not dwelling in him and controlling him but instead, sin is dwelling in him and controlling him. This control is not a violation of his freewill but a confession that he is not exercising the spiritual strength to do what he knows (and wills) to do. This is a *failure to achieve* what he determines

to do, not his *inability* to do it. It is his spiritual weakness which wins the struggle. This failure is even more evident because Paul says he “succeeds” in doing what he hates. In all of this he is saying that the desire to do good is with me but the strength to follow it through is not. “I do the evil which I hate instead of doing the good which I desire.” He struggled with sin just as we struggle with sin.

Four important conclusions follow in verses 21-25. First, when he wants to do good evil fights against him. He is in a constant battle. Second, he delights in God’s law but the resident power of sin dwelling “in my members” is fighting against him and making him a prisoner of the law of sin. Third, in desperation he faces himself, seeing what a miserable and wretched man he truly is. His case is hopeless. Who can possibly rescue him from this hopeless situation? Fourth, as if a bright light of hope suddenly appears on the horizon he says, “Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” See also 8:31-39 and I Cor. 15:57 where similar expressions occur, although in a somewhat different context.

Chapter IX

Life in the Spirit

Freedom and Blessings

Rom. 8:1-39

The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus. Rom. 8:1-11

Thus far in the book of Romans Paul has specifically mentioned the Holy Spirit only once, Rom. 5:5 although there are two possible indirect references in Rom. 1:4 and 7:6. He used the term “spirit” in 2:29 but in that reference he was not referring to the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, in Rom. 8:1-27 he refers specifically to the Holy Spirit at least sixteen times. It is easy to see why chapter 8 is generally referred to by the title, “Life in the Spirit.” In addition, it is interesting to note that he uses the word “flesh,” seven times in the first seven chapters but of those seven occurrences, only two or possibly three pertain to sin. In chapter 8 he uses that word twelve times, most of which describe the sinful walk of the unregenerate man. We need to notice again that in the NIV the expression “sinful nature” occurs rather than “flesh” although the Greek text consistently has σαρξ (*sarx*), the common Greek word for flesh.

Chapter 8 is the culminating section in Paul’s explanation of the new life in Christ which he began in 6:4. This newness of life is to be characterized by ethical-moral purity but it also involves daily struggles with the one’s weaknesses and the many temptations which accompany the Christian lifestyle. In Gal. 5:16 Paul exhorted the Galatians to “walk by the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” However, in Romans he does not discuss the specific meaning of this idea until he comes to the eighth chapter although the previous chapters are filled with exhortations to holy living. In chapters 1-7 he tells us about justification, atonement, faith, grace, law, sin, death, the newness of life, etc. but in the eighth chapter he describes the presence and power of the Spirit in this endeavor. This is the longest discussion in the entire Bible of this aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. Not only has Christ justified us, delivered us from the power of sin and death, etc., but he has also empowered us with the indwelling Spirit.

Chapter 8 contrasts “life in the flesh” with “life in the Spirit.” Paul tells us about the presence and power of the Spirit which dwells in every Christian who strives to resist these forces of sin with which he lives. One’s new birth into Christ does not eliminate these struggles but the indwelling of God’s Spirit provides added assurance of victory and gives secure meaning to the Christian’s life of hope. In this chapter Paul tells us that God’s Spirit dwells in us, not simply as “knowledge of his word” as some would have us believe, but as the dynamic presence of God living in us and empowering our lives, helping us become what God wants us to be. It is this power which bears fruit unto God (Gal. 5:22). Some of the Greek philosophers taught that knowing good leads to doing good. Paul repudiates this in chapter 7 where he says he knows, but does not always do. In chapter 8 he gives us the key to the newness of life.

There is a transition from the last thought in chapter 7 to the contents of chapter 8 and Paul links his thoughts by using the word “Therefore.” He shows that what he is about to say has a dynamic connection to what he has previously said. In fact, without chapter 8 his readers would not know how to handle and overcome the struggles which he has just described in chapter 7.

Commentary

In verse 1 he affirms an important truth: “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Some manuscripts, particularly those of the Syrian text type, add the words “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” This phrase is found in verse 4 and it is generally thought that a copyist inserted it thinking that verse 1 was incomplete. However the manuscript evidence for this addition is weak. The opening verse sets the tone for the chapter, much of which is Paul’s commentary on this phrase. In view of the justification which comes through the atonement offered by Christ and one’s baptism into union with Christ, the condemnation of sin and death has lost its power – it has been destroyed. This is Paul’s explanation of his victory statement in 7:24-25. The law of sin and death was appropriately stated in Deut. 27:26; “Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out. Then all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’” In Christ Jesus, this law no longer exists. In 6:3-4 Paul described how baptism was the culminating act which gave an individual entrance into union with Christ and his death.

In verse 2 he describes this by saying that “the death of ‘the law of sin and death’ was brought about by ‘the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.’” Of what law was Paul speaking when he says “the law of sin and death?” Some say it was the Law of Moses while others go all the way back to Adam and the entrance of sin which brought death into the world. It is true that Deut. 27:26, referenced above, referred to the Law of Moses, but the principle stated there is much broader than the Mosaic Law. We must remember that the nature of law (any law) is to define right and wrong, not to forgive violations. Since Paul is showing the contrast between “sin and death” compared with “justification and life,” it is only reasonable that he speaks of the origin of “sin and death,” just as he speaks of the origin of “justification and life.” The indwelling Spirit, of which Paul speaks in this chapter, is stronger than the indwelling of sin of which he has spoken in chapter 7.

This also brings up the question, “What is the meaning of the phrase ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus?’” Earlier he showed the impossibility of justification by law (3:19-20), but now he speaks of the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” making one free from “the law of sin and death.” It should be evident that he is not speaking of justification coming through another law of some sort because he has contended that it was the atonement of Christ which brought justification (3:21-26). Taking these things into account Paul is expressing the truth of Christ’s atoning act as the “law of the Spirit.” The law of the Spirit then is the statement (principle) of one’s justification by grace through faith. This is contrasted with the impossible legal system of justification by works of law. So the “Spirit’s law” (justification through Jesus Christ) makes us free from “sin and death’s” law which is completely impotent as a means of justification. Fitzmyer states a somewhat similar position by saying, “The law of the Spirit is nothing other than the ‘Spirit of God’ (8:9a, 14) or the ‘Spirit of Christ’ (8:8b) in its ruling function in the sphere of Christ. It is the dynamic principle of the new life, creating vitality and separating humans from sin and death, indeed, supplying the very vitality that the Mosaic Law could not give. It is the life giving Spirit of God himself, which ‘dwells’ in the justified Christian (8:9).” (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 482-483.) Paul’s use of *νομος* (*nomos*), usually translated “law,” can also carry the idea of “principle” as well as code of regulations. Therefore Paul’s statement could read, “the principle of sin and death” and “the principle of the Spirit of life.” Arndt and Gingrich

show that this is a legitimate meaning of the word. (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 544.) Paul is not introducing a “new law” to come in and take the place of an “old law” as if he were speaking of the removal of the Mosaic Law and the instituting of the new covenant. In order to explain this further Paul says that freedom came from the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” This freedom is the effect of the atonement not simply a new legal code coming in to replace an old legal code.

Verses 3-4 reaffirm this principle and give additional information. “What the law could not do [that is, was powerless to do] in that it was weak through the flesh God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This statement brings up a variety of important questions. Earlier Paul used the word “law” in opposite ways – “the law of sin and death” and “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Now he speaks of two opposite walks – “walk after the flesh” and “walk after the Spirit.” In what way do these contribute to the meaning of verses 3-4? First he states that there was something which the law could not do. Then he says that the law “was weak through the flesh.” In what way was the law (of sin and death or the Law of Moses) weak through the flesh? The expression **ἐν ᾧ** (*en hō*), verse 3 can be translated “in which or wherein.” Paul says that the law was not able to overcome sin and death (*i.e.* the power of sin). The law addressed man’s perfect obedience but did not have the power to remedy man’s violations (sins). Since man’s fleshly lusts drew him away from God (disobedience) and law had no power to justify, the law was seen as weak in regard to the fleshly desires of mankind and the necessity of justification. Some believe that this passage means that the weakness of the law was that it was given to only one nation instead of to all people. However, the context does not support this interpretation.

God remedied this by sending “his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.” The expression “in the likeness of sinful flesh” does not mean that Jesus only *appeared* to be a human being but was not a true human being. Paul uses the word **ομοιωματι** (*homoioḗmati*) which literally means that which is conformed to, or that which is a form or shape.” Also, see Phil. 2:5-11 where he describes the incarnation a little more fully. On the other hand, Paul does not use the word **φαίνω** (*phainō*), which is the word most frequently used to describe that which has an outward appearance but is not true inwardly. See Matt. 23:27-28 where Jesus uses the word **φαίνω** (*phainō*) to describe the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. In the context of Rom. 8:3-4 Paul is saying that although the Son was divine, he took the form (the shape) of every other human being, he kept the law perfectly (without sin), and thus passed judgment against the law’s weakness and its inability to provide justification. Jesus provided this for all mankind through his blood.

Next, Paul uses the word **κατεκρινεν** (*katekrinen*) which means “to condemn or to give judgment against.” Christ passed judgment on sin by keeping God’s law and presenting himself as an offering for sin. The uprightness demanded by the law was finally attained, not by Paul (or us) but by Christ. The results of Christ’s sacrifice are passed on to those who “walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit,” trusting in Christ’s atonement. The key Greek phrase in all of this is **το δικαίωμα του νομου** (*to dikaiōma tou nomou*) which means “the righteous [or just] acts of the law,” *i.e.*, the legal requirements of the law. In the early chapters Paul has fully described

how this takes place through one's faith in the sacrifice of Christ rather than one's own achievements in keeping a law. However, one who has been justified by Christ is to "walk in newness of life" (6:4). In chapter 8 he describes this as walking in the Spirit and contrasts it with those who "live according to the flesh." Again, the NIV translates σαρξ (*sarx*) as "sinful nature" rather than "flesh." This leaves the wrong impression concerning both the character and the source of our sinful behavior. Keck makes an important observation concerning this: "Paul is contrasting neither "natures" nor "levels" but sovereignties that govern one's life." (Keck, *op. cit.* p. 202.)

In verses 5-6 Paul says that those who live according to the flesh, σαρξ (*sarx*), mind the things related to that lifestyle, *i.e.* sin. However, those whose mind is set on the Spirit concentrate on the things of the Spirit. The writer then contrasts the results of these two sovereignties. The mindset (φρονημα – *phronēma*) of the flesh is death (because of "the law of sin and death") but the mindset of the Spirit is life and peace (because of the sacrifice of Christ). The "mind of the Spirit" and the "mind of the flesh" are two spheres or states of being in which people live. Those who live under grace are living in the sphere of justification and forgiveness while those who live under the legalism of law live in the sphere of sin and guilt.

Verses 7-8 continue to explain this. "The mindset of the flesh is hostility toward God for it is not subject to the law of God nor can it be." In this, Paul seems to go back to his statement in 6:1 where he challenges the conclusion of his readers, "Shall we go on sinning in order to display the extent of the grace of God?" Paul's answer in 6:2-3 and also here in 8:7-8 is, "You cannot walk by the Spirit and live in the flesh at the same time." The culmination of all of this is stated in the last sentence of verse 8. "Those who are in the flesh [controlled by the flesh] cannot please God." This is a repetition of the principle stated in verse 5.

Verse 9 identifies Paul's readers as "not in the flesh but in the Spirit. "In the Spirit" is their state of being or the sphere in which Christians live from day to day. This is descriptive of a Christian's continual relationship to God through Christ, giving the child of God the assurance of his salvation. Also, see 5:1-2 where Paul gives that assurance. However, as the apostle said in chapters 6-7 this is not license to live as one pleases, but to fulfill the responsibilities of this relationship, knowing that he is the object of the unfathomable love of God. One's obedience is his expression of gratitude for God's gift of grace. Some tend to make these statements absolute descriptions. We must remember that Christians commit sins yet this does not constitute "walking after the flesh" or "walking in darkness" as in I Jn. 1:5—2:2.

Paul speaks of his own struggle in I Cor. 9:27. Remember that he is writing to Christians who are not living perfectly sinless lives. However, in this verse, he says specifically, "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." Christians sin, but that does not mean that with each sin they are suddenly "walking in the flesh" and then upon repentance and prayer they are again "walking in the Spirit." His readers were not living perfectly sinless lives, but they sustained a relationship to God, and the Holy Spirit continued to dwell in them. Some Christians take an absolute view of salvation, believing that every wrong thought, misdeed, or failure to "do enough good" deprives them of salvation until they repent and pray for forgiveness. The result of this is that these people never have complete confidence or assurance of their salvation at any particular moment because no one can ever know if he has "done

enough.” Instead, Paul is offering assurance to his readers that their salvation is secure.

To this Paul adds, “if (or since) the Spirit of God dwells in you.” The Greek word **εἴπερ** (*eiper*) can be translated “if, perhaps, in fact, or since” and various versions translate it in any of these ways. Sometimes Paul speaks of the Spirit dwelling in Christians, and at other times he speaks of Christians being “in the Spirit.” In Jn. 10:38 and Jn. 14:10-11 Jesus used the same expression in speaking of his own relationship to the Father. Paul says that one must “have the Spirit of Christ” or he does not belong to Christ. In the New Testament the Spirit is referred to as the Advocate, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, etc. The indwelling of the Spirit is expressed also in a variety of ways: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), “the Spirit of God dwells in you” (I Cor. 3:16), “the Holy Spirit which is in you” (I Cor. 3:19), and “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9). In verse 10 Paul speaks of Christ being in Christians. The New Testament is replete with statements of the indwelling of the Spirit in God’s people. This does not imply that Christians are given miraculous powers but it is a simple statement that when we become Christians – are born again – God gives us his Spirit.

Paul uses the word **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*), “spirit,” to refer to the Holy Spirit and also to the human spirit. Scholars are divided concerning Paul use of the word in the latter part of verse 10. Is it the human spirit of which he speaks or is it the Holy Spirit? When sin was introduced into the world it brought both physical and spiritual death. Fitzmyer and others make a distinction in Paul’s use of the word at this point. Paul speaks of death dwelling in the human body because of sin. That one is spiritually dead. The apostle then gives his contrast to this by saying that the Christian has God’s Spirit dwelling in him, thus giving spiritual life to the human spirit. So Paul first uses **πνεῦμα** (*pneuma*), “spirit,” to refer to the Holy Spirit (verse 9, “controlled by the Spirit,” “Spirit of God,” and “Spirit of Christ”) but then he uses the word to refer to the human spirit (“yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness”). (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 490-491, and Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-198.) Many translations (ASV, NASV, and NIV) make this distinction by not capitalizing the last use of the word in verse 10, thus indicating that the translators believe the word, in that case, refers to the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. (Also see James Denney, *The Expositor’s Greek Testament: St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, vol. II, W. Robertson Nicholl, editor, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1967), pp. 646-647.)

On the other hand, other translations, such as the KJV and NRSV, capitalize Spirit in the latter part of verse 10 indicating that those translators believe that the use of the word in both cases refers to the Holy Spirit. Some commentators such as Keck and Murray believe that this is the correct rendering of the Greek text. If this is correct, the meaning would be that the Holy Spirit is “life-giving because of righteousness.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-204 and Murray, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-290.) The indwelling of the Spirit would make righteousness possible because it is an indication that the requirements of the law have been fulfilled in Christ. In Gal. 5:22-23 Paul speaks of “the fruit of the Spirit” indicating that the presence of the Spirit in a Christian produces certain behavior and this is thought to be the meaning of Paul’s statements in Rom. 8:9-10. The context appears to favor the position taken by Fitzmyer and Denney that it is the human spirit to which Paul refers in the latter part of verse 10 not to the Holy Spirit. This is also supported by verse 11.

Verse 11 is Paul’s conclusion to the discussion in verses 5-10. He begins by using a conditional

clause saying, “But if the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you . . .” Here the Spirit is spoken of as the Spirit of God and assures Christians that the Father’s Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead is the same Spirit which indwells God’s people today empowering them to live lives of holiness. Going back to the idea in verse 10 Paul says that the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies. Most commentators believe this is speaking of the eschatological resurrection of the body described in I Cor. 15, saying that it fits well with Paul’s statement that the body is dead because of sin but alive because of the indwelling of God’s Spirit (verse 10). James Denney says, “The indwelling of the spirit is that of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, and as such it is the guarantee that our mortal bodies also (as well as our spirits) shall share in immortality.” (Denney, *op. cit.*, p. 647.) Although Denney does not expand it further, it appears that he incorporates I Cor. 15:53 which says, “this mortal must put on immortality.” A similar position is taken by Barmby: “The frail, mortal, ever-dying earthen vessels, in which we have now the treasure of our life in Christ, are there regarded as crippling the expansion of our spiritual life, and causing us to ‘groan, being burdened’ . . . but the very consciousness of this higher life within us, yearning so for an adequate deathless organism assures the apostle that God has one in store for him, having already given him ‘the earnest of the Spirit.’ And this seems to be what is meant here by ‘shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you.’” (Barmby, *op. cit.* p. 208. Also see Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 490-491.) Notice that Barmby links the “earnest (deposit) of the Spirit” with the indwelling of the Spirit and the final resurrection. We must also keep in mind however that “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50) and Paul is not telling the Roman church that their mortal bodies will be rejuvenated and rise from the dead.

Benefits of life in the Spirit. 8:12-17

In this block Paul move on to discuss certain benefits of walking by the Spirit. Verse 13 is his final statement of the contrast between walking by the flesh and walking by the Spirit. There are some parallels between verses 15-17 and Gal. 4:6-7. Verses 18-27 continue with his discussion of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Commentary

Verse 12 begins with “Therefore” or “So then” showing the link to what he has just said. We are debtors, not to the flesh but to the Spirit. This is similar to his statement in 12:1-2 that we are not to be conformed to the world. Living by the dictates of the flesh is not the norm for the Christian’s new life in the Spirit. Sanday paraphrases verses 12-13 in this way: “Such a destiny has its obligations. To the flesh you own nothing. If you live as it would have you, you must inevitably die. But if you live by the help of the Spirit you sternly put an end to the license of the flesh, then in the fullest sense you will live.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 201.)

In verses 13-14 Paul says that the consequence of living by the flesh is death, as he has stated earlier, but the consequence of living by the Spirit is life. The reason for this is that those who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God. There are two important considerations here. First, the fact that a Christian is no longer living in the flesh places him in a somewhat neutral position – he now refrains from the temptations of the flesh. Beyond this neutral state, he must go on to be led by the Spirit – pick up an active Spirit led life. This is Paul’s way of expressing the active

influence of the Spirit of God in one's life.

This raises an important question. "What is it to be led by the Spirit?" (Compare Gal. 5:18.) It is an objective experience. God gives us specific instructions about the doctrinal, moral, and ethical standards by which the Christian is to live. He does this through his word which is our guide in all things. Our respect for and willingness to know his will is designed to bring us to obedience. Our Christ-like behavior is evidence that we are following the leading of his Spirit. Paul is not speaking of a sort of subjective extra-Biblical revelation or impulse in which God "tells" his children what to believe, what they are to decide, or what they are to do in a particular circumstance. This is a very tempting idea among many people but such subjectivity concerning the leading of the Spirit results in all sorts of contradictions and conflicts with little or no evidence of divine guidance except what one "feels in his heart." This is the leading of one's emotions and inclinations rather than the leading of the Spirit. Instead, Paul is speaking of God's children being willing to allow God's Spirit-inspired word to guide their lives. Does the Spirit help in this by empowering us to carry out God's word? Yes, as shown in Gal. 5:22-23 and other texts where he says that the products (fruit) of the Spirit are to be reproduced in our lives.

Verse 14 tells us that those who submit to the leadership of the Spirit are the sons of God. Only three times in the New Testament epistles are Christians referred to as "sons of God" (Rom. 8:14, 8:19, and Gal. 3:26). Jesus used the expression twice (Matt. 5:9 and Lk. 20:36). The expression "children of God" is found ten times in the New Testament, eight of which are in the epistles. In this statement Paul is preparing to make the point that we, as sons of God, have assurance of our salvation.

Verse 15 tells us that we did not receive a spirit of slavery which leads to the bondage of fear but the "spirit of adoption (sonship)." The word **υιοθεσιας** (*huiiothesias*), translated "adoption," describes one's sonship in God's family. In the Roman world this was a legal term referring to the elevation of one who was outside of a family to be brought into a full relationship within the family. It occurs only five times in the New Testament and is used only by Paul. See Rom. 8:15, 8:23, 9:4, Gal. 4:5 and Eph. 1:5. This gives a strong affirmation that the Christian does not live in fear of being lost but in assurance of being saved. We must remember that under law, a person never knows if he has "done enough," he may have sinned unknowingly, or he may have failed to do something which he should have done. Therefore he can never be completely sure of his standing with God. Paul assures us that grace removes this uncertainty. In this verse Paul also says that this is brought about by "the spirit of *sonship*" which gives us the right to call God by the intimate term, "Abba." The word **Αββα** (*Abba*) is Aramaic, meaning "Father" and as such it is really a duplication of the Greek word **Πατηρ** (*patēr*), "Father." For the Hebrews it came to be an intimate family address showing great respect for the father as well as the realization of a very close and loving relationship. It was thought of not just as "father" but as "our father" or "Oh, my father." We are no longer slaves but sons. The word **Αββα** (*Abba*) is used three times in the New Testament, Mk. 14:36 (Jesus in Gethsemane), Rom., 8:15, and Gal. 4:6. Paul's statement takes the motivation of obedience out of the realms of (1) primarily a legal obligation, (2) the desire for reward (heaven), or (3) fear of punishment (hell). Instead verse 15 places obedience into the realm of profound gratitude and love. Notice that the motivation of fear of punishment, hope of reward, and legal obligation are all "me-centered." The motivation

of love and gratitude is God-centered. This does not minimize or remove obligation, hope of reward or fear of punishment from the equation, but it places them in the sunlight of God's grace and his love for his children.

In verse 16 Paul speaks of the testimony of the Spirit in conjunction with our spirit. He uses the word *συμμαρτυρεῖ* (*summarturei*) which means to “testify together, joint testimony, or to support another.” Here Paul brings together a subjective element and an objective element. Emphasis in the Protestant world has been primarily on the subjective aspect of the word, *i.e.* the way we feel about our relationship to God and our standing as “sons of God.” Paul's statement is balanced. The Spirit has revealed God's word which is to guide us in mind and behavior and in this way we know God's will. Our own spirit affirms or denies that we have come into Christ as the Spirit has directed in God's revelation. We should notice that Paul does not say that God's Spirit directly reveals to man how to become a child of God, but it is addressed to one who is already God's son. The Spirit of God assures us (our spirits) that we are his children. This assurance has been part of Paul's polemic from 5:1 forward.

What then is the end result of this? Verse 17 says that as “sons of God” we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ if we share in his sufferings in order that we may share in his glory. Paul does not have in mind that suffering persecution is a prerequisite to salvation. He is recognizing that opposition of many kinds is a natural consequence of being a Christian. He gave Timothy similar information in II Tim. 2: 11-13 and II Tim. 3:12. This would have been evident to Christians during the first few centuries.

Blessing to Those Who are Justified by Faith. 8:18-27

Throughout the book of Romans Paul pauses after a section of polemic to give some conclusions or observations based on what he has just said. Some commentators consider the entire block, 8:18-39, as the climax to 6:1 – 8:17. It also forms a sort of introduction to chapters 9-11 where he deals with the grand subject of the sovereignty of God and the true calling and mission of the Hebrew nation. This block, verses 18-27, gives us a group of observations, some of which are exclusively Pauline.

Sin had infected all parts of God's creation. Paul sees the redemption and reconciliation of mankind as an integral part of the redemption of the entire universe, both animate and inanimate. Is this a symbolic description or is it literal? The literal interpretation of this is not supported in the New Testament generally so we conclude that it is a vivid description of the vast consequences of sin and the completeness of reconciliation. Having called our attention to the exalted privilege of being called the “sons of God” our writer now wants to tell us of some of the privileges of that status. He begins by saying that our temporary sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the coming revelation of God's sons and the restoration of creation. Our work and our suffering are not to be thought of in terms of a sort of counter-weight or “simply a price we pay” for our future glory with the Creator. In addition, as we patiently wait for that grand event, we are comforted by the help of the Spirit who intercedes for us when we pray.

Finally, Paul assures God's people that we are predestined to be conformed to the image of

Christ, awaiting our glorification. God is working in our behalf and no power or event can separate us from God's love through Christ. In all these things we are more than conquerors.

Commentary

Verse 18 begins the word λογίζομαι (*logizomai*) which can be translated "I reckon that," "I conclude," or "I firmly believe that." Is Paul about to express his personal opinion based on what has just been written or is this also part of the divine message? Either way, the message is true and forceful. As Paul's own opinion it states his convictions based on the divine message about which he has just written. Its truth is undeniable. On the other hand, as part of the message of God it is forceful and also logical. We might paraphrase the idea in this way: "Based on the truth of all which has been said, this is the only conclusion that one could draw."

The content of verses 19-22 is unique. The Bible does not generally speak of the creation waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, so we have very few cross-references to which we can appeal. Scholars and commentators are understandably divided concerning the meaning of these verses. Some commentators believe that in verse 22 the phrase *πάσα ἡ κτίσις* (*pasa hē ktisis*), translated "the whole creation" or "all the creation," is speaking of the entire rational creation including animal life as well as human life, etc. On the other hand there are those who believe that this is limited to the non-rational or non-intelligent creation, *i.e.* brute animal life, plant life, and the physical universe. However, this would not include mankind. Obviously all of this is speculation but it demonstrates the general difficulty which commentators see concerning these expressions.

The word *κτίσις* (*ktisis*), meaning "that which has been created or the creation," is used in this text. Perhaps Paul is emphasizing the inseparability of man from the rest of creation. When Adam sinned God pronounced a curse on the ground, saying, "Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." (Gen. 3:17-19) This should not be interpreted to mean that human labor was brought on by sin. God always intended that man should work. Prior to Adam's sin he was given the responsibility of dressing and caring for the garden. (Gen. 2:15) However, the curse placed everything in a much more difficult context. Sin brought devastation not only to Adam but to the whole creation as well. We interpret this to mean that "we live in a fallen world." Paul uses this metaphorically to describe the contrast between the destructive power of sin and Christ's redemptive power to destroy sin. Paul describes us as living in the "between time." That is, we are living between the resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection when our physical bodies will be "redeemed," *i.e.*, we will be given immortal bodies (I Cor. 15:50-55). If Paul is speaking symbolically, which appears to make good sense of the passage, he is saying that all which was lost in Adam will be restored in Christ. He appears to symbolize the redemption of mankind and the creation much as Isaiah symbolically described the Messianic Age as those who will "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks," and "nation will not take up sword against nation," and "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them," Is. 2:4, 11:6-9. Dispensationalists and some other commentators generally relate this to a literal "new heavens and new earth" (or rejuvenated heaven and earth) of which the prophets and

Revelation speak. See Is. 65:17, 66:22, II Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1. However, this kind of literalism is not supported by New Testament statements concerning the Parousia.

Verses 20-21 say that the frustration of the whole creation came about, not through any fault of its own but because God pronounced a curse on the land (Gen. 3:17-19). In contrast to this the whole creation shall be redeemed from this curse. The word **ματαιοτητι** (*mataiotēti*), which is translated “frustration, vanity, or futility,” literally means “religious error, false religion, vanity, or folly.” This underscores the fact that the creation was “subjected to “vanity and folly” as a result of the entrance of sin. It is interesting that Paul does not say that the curse was pronounced by Satan or by Adam but by “the one who subjected it in hope that the creation would be liberated from its bondage.” The severe consequences of sin are once again emphasized. However, God did this in hope of its liberation. We live in an unnatural world. It is not as God originally intended but the whole creation (including us) lives in hope – expectation – of its redemption. The New Testament does not give us any details or a description of that process or its results.

In verses 22-25 Paul says that the whole creation waits for the true sons of God to be revealed. Writers of some traditional Jewish literature (non-Biblical), as well as some of the Christian patristic writers of the second and third centuries believed that there would be a rejuvenation of this earth. The Jewish emphasis was on the Messianic Age but the patristic emphasis was on the theory of the millennial reign of Christ. John Knox quotes a famous statement from Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*) as he describes what he believed to be the anticipated earthly millennial reign of Christ. “The days will come in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand branches, and on each branch ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and on each cluster, ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed will yield twenty-five measures of wine. . . . Likewise also a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand heads, and every head shall have ten thousand grains and every grain ten thousand pounds of fine flour.” (John Knox, *The Epistle to the Romans: The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, George Buttrick, editor, (New York: Abingdon Press), 1954. pp. 519-520.) Paul was certainly not thinking in those terms and Irenaeus was certainly speaking figuratively but each of these shows that the writer is thinking in terms of the grandeur of the final conquest and destruction of the powers of sin and its degradation. Paul describes the suffering of creation as a woman giving birth (8:19-21). His statement in this passage and Isaiah's statements cited above (Is. 2:4 and 11:6-9) are best understood as symbolic of the grand climax of Christ's redemptive act.

In addition to the groaning of “all creation,” Christians – *i.e.* “we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit” – also participate in this frustration and groaning as we await the redemption of our bodies. Paul is speaking of the Parousia. He uses the imagery of the Old Testament that the first fruits of the harvest belong to God but these statements also give secure anticipation of the harvest to come. This imagery comes up frequently in Exodus and Leviticus. All of this reflects our hope for the future. Once again, notice that Paul is not speaking of a wistful desire or a far off yearning but of secure expectation. It is not yet a reality, for who hopes for (anticipates) what he already has? However, we wait patiently for the fulfillment of these promises from God.

Verses 26-27 show how the Spirit supports our prayers. As such they constitute two of the most important verses in the New Testament concerning prayer yet they are not frequently cited. God gives us the Spirit which helps us in our weaknesses (infirmity) since we do not always know

exactly what we need to pray for. The word **συναντιλαμβάνεται** (*sunantilambanetai*) is very interesting. In most English versions it is translated “to help.” It is a double compound word made up of **συν** (*sun*), “together with, to go with, to accompany, or to assist,” **αντι** (*anti*) which means “against, to answer to or in the place of,” and **λαμβάνω** (*lambanō*) which means to take up” or “to take in hand.” When compounded, this word means “to take hold with anyone,” “to support another,” or “to come to the aid of someone.” It carries the idea of one who bears a portion of the load of someone else or shares responsibility. Notice that the word does not simply mean “to accompany someone.” It is a strong word which occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Lk. 10:40 where Martha asked for the help of Mary her sister. (Her use of this word indicates the strength of her frustration because she had no support from her sister.) A.T. Robertson expresses the meaning of Paul’s statement in this way: “Here beautifully Paul pictures the Holy Spirit taking hold at our side at the very time of our weakness . . . and before [it is] too late.” (Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament: The Epistles of Paul*, Vol. IV, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 376.) In a sense, Paul says that the Spirit shoulders the burden of our weakness and prays along with us. Furthermore, Paul speaks of our inability to know what to pray for. Some translations say “*how to pray*” and scholars are divided as to which is more in line with the context. The Greek construction allows for either of these.

Our weaknesses in prayer are overcome as the Spirit bears our burden “with groans which cannot be uttered.” Every person who prays honestly experiences this incapacity over and over, not just once in awhile. We have our own weaknesses which hinder us or we feel inadequate to express either our own needs or the needs of others. Prayer is one of the most misunderstood blessings which God has given us. It is thought of as a routine activity at the end of the day or before we eat a meal. We know the “requirements for acceptable prayer” as if these legal guidelines make up the essence of prayer. Too frequently we think that we “know what we want,” or we “know what we need,” and we “expect God to bend to our will.” Which of us is really that wise and which of us is that spiritual? Our frustrations and weaknesses, our problems and needs are truly beyond our limited comprehension but we usually fail to see or to admit this. How can we honestly “pray as we should” or “ask for what we ought to pray for?” Paul says, “The Spirit helps our infirmity.”

Paul, after his vision on the road to Damascus, prayed for three days. Do we think he began his prayers in the same old way, repeated the things he had always said in prayer or repeated a memorized prayer? Did he know what he needed? Did he repeat a “formal prayer?” It seems to me that he was like an infant crying out because he knows that something is not right but he does not know what has gone wrong or what is missing or how to correct it. He cries out with highly audible but wordless sounds because he has no other way of articulating his deepest needs, not even knowing what those needs might be. He can only cry out but his mother’s love and wisdom bring her rushing to meet the felt but unspeakable needs of her little baby. It seems to me that this is the situation which Paul describes in Rom. 8:26. We need to learn to *pray* not to “*say a prayer*.” We need to allow God’s Spirit to intercede because we don’t really know the deepest needs of our lives. The physical man prays for what he “*knows*” are his needs. The spiritual man prays for what he *does not know that he needs* but in his total despondency he casts himself on the holiness, the love, and the compassion of his heavenly Father. This is one of the vast differences between *praying* and *saying a prayer*. How often are our prayers the same in their thoughtlessness and vain repetitious content? Which of us is really so wise or so spiritual that he

truly knows his own needs?

The truth is that we probably do not understand or fully comprehend our needs or those of others for whom we are praying. Our own personal weaknesses contribute to this incapacity. William Barclay expresses this weakness and incapacity in very practical terms. “There are two very obvious reasons why we cannot pray as we ought. First, we cannot pray aright because we cannot foresee the future. We cannot see a year or even an hour ahead; and we may well pray to be saved from things which are for our good, and we may well pray for things which would be to our ultimate harm. . . . Second, we cannot pray aright because even in any given situation we do not know what is best for us. We are often in the position of a child who wants something which would be bound only to hurt him; and God is often in the position of a parent who has to refuse his child’s request.” (Barclay, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.)

The sighs or groaning which cannot be uttered pertain to one’s inability to know what to pray for or how to pray. The Spirit searches the heart and intercedes to the Father in our behalf. The emphasis is on the intercession of the Spirit rather than a simple supplement to our own words. The Spirit works in our behalf in our prayers bringing our silent message to the Father even though our thoughts may be very inadequate.

The Victories of Faith. 8:28-39

Some commentators treat verses 28-39 as a continuation of the previous section while others consider it a separate section. These verses are Paul’s conclusion to all he has said thus far. He has shown the difference between justification by grace through faith and justification by works, walking by the Spirit and walking by the flesh, and the great gifts which God has in store for us as the whole creation awaits the Parousia. Then he turns to the intercession of the Spirit on our behalf and concludes that all things in God’s plan are working together for the good of those who love him. Although 8:28 is frequently used to describe God’s providence in all of the events of our lives, this is not the real impact of that verse. Verses 31-39 are among the finest in the Bible to describe God’s care for his people, the victories he promises, and his assurance to never allow anything to come between us and the love which our Lord has for his children.

Commentary

The sense of verse 28 is, “not only does the Holy Spirit work in our behalf, but ‘We know that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord.’” Paul uses the Greek word **οἶδα** (*oida*) – “to know” rather than **γινώσκω** (*ginōskō*) which is also translated “to know.” The words are closely related in their meaning. Some linguists believe that **γινώσκω** (*ginōskō*) refers primarily to knowing and understanding an idea or a person while **οἶδα** (*oida*) emphasizes our understanding through thorough investigation. The difference in the words does not appear to be greatly significant.

It is important to notice the context of this statement. As stated above, verse 28 is frequently applied to all of the events of life to show the providence of God at work in these circumstances. Although it is evident from Scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament, that God’s providence is at work in our lives, that broad application is not the message of this verse. The context

shows that God has given us assurance from a number of sources that his plans and purposes are working for our good. In those passages he was speaking of our justification and our ultimate salvation. Now, he summarizes this by saying, “We know that *all things* work together for good to those who love the Lord.” What are the “all things” of which he speaks? We can recall these by looking over the first seven chapters of the book. Among them is the Holy Spirit’s intercession on our behalf, our justification by grace through faith, the peace we have with God because of his gift of Christ, the assurance that there is no condemnation in Christ, etc. In addition he has shown the futility of a theology of salvation by works because all have sinned and the wages of sin is death. Having been a strict Pharisee, Paul knew what would be in the mind of many of his recipients. They may have been thinking, “Paul, do you mean God ignores all of our good deeds?” Our writer pauses in verse 28 to remind them that in every aspect of the gospel, God’s plans provide the Christian with greater security, hope, and peace than could ever have come under works salvation, Judaism, or Paganism.

Verses 29-30 support this but they also bring up some difficult questions concerning God’s foreknowledge, election, and predestination. In trying to understand these things we are forced to make certain assumptions, and our conclusions based on these assumptions, are tentative and uncertain at best. We must enter this discussion with two important principles before us. First we must remember that just as God is not restricted to the limitations of the natural world, so also he is not limited by linear time as we are. He exists outside of linear time. Therefore we cannot understand or solve the apparent conflict between man’s freewill and the omniscience of God, that is, he knows all things, whether past, present or future. Eternity has neither a beginning nor an end and therefore there is no such thing as past or future as we have in linear time. God’s foreknowledge (what we would call “the future”) is no different from his past knowledge (which we would call “the past”). Seemingly then, the only conclusion we can come to is that eternity is always in the “present.” In linear time we view all things, including time itself, as having a beginning and an end. We must assume that eternity does not have these limitations. This leads to our second principle. We cannot capture the meaning of an infinite idea by placing it into a finite setting. This means that we can never fully comprehend the Biblical doctrine of God’s foreknowledge, election, and predestination. Failure of many people, including theologians, to consider these principles has caused a great deal of misunderstandings on this topic. However the expression “to know,” as it relates to God, has a deeper meaning in Scripture than just to know the events which will take place in the future. In both Old Testament and New the picture of God “knowing his people” carried the idea of a personal and covenantal relationship. See Jer. 1:5, Amos 3:2, I Cor. 8:3, 13:12, and Gal. 4:9 where this expression is used.

With these two principles in mind, we must ask ourselves, “What *can* we understand about Rom. 8:28-30 and kindred passages?” We must engage in an exegesis which discards contemporary and historical speculations about unconditional personal election and try to deal only with the meaning of the text itself. Many questions will remain unanswered. However, from this passage we can draw some important conclusions which are theologically and exegetically sound, and which give us important and usable information about God’s purposes in both Old Testament and New Testament. Paul was writing to Christians and we must interpret the passage in that light. It was always God’s intent that his people, Christians, be conformed to Christ. Therefore he says in verse 29 that it was God’s decision all along that they conform to the godliness and holiness of Christ.

Some commentators consider this to be an eschatological statement but the context does not appear to support this. He is not speaking of the resurrection of the body but of the life of a follower of Jesus. These were those whom he had “foreknown.” The idea for God “to know” comes from the Old Testament, and it does not necessarily carry the requirement of personal or national unconditional election to salvation. There is an overriding purpose in what the Father does. Going back to God’s covenant with Israel (Ex. 19:3-8), the people agreed to abide by his covenantal decrees. However, as we read the history of Israel we see that this “election” by God did not mean that the nation would be “saved” but that they would be part of God’s purpose which was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. They were to be a “kingdom of priests, a holy nation, and God’s treasured possession.” In 8:28-30 Paul is showing that Christians are in that same covenantal, but nevertheless, conditional relationship with God.

We have the right to reject God’s offer although his intent is that all men be saved. “God is not willing that any should perish,” (II Pet. 3:9) but he does not violate the freewill of mankind. Paul’s entire statement that “all things work together for good” is linked to “those who love the Lord.” His purpose and work in our salvation was not a haphazard unplanned scheme but a well planned atonement which was designed to work for man’s good. God’s intent in all of this was that all mankind would respond to his gift of Christ. We must conclude then that all human beings were predestined (elected) by God to be saved. However, some have rejected God’s offer. Unfortunately God’s will is not presently done “on earth as it is in heaven” and we all have the freedom to chose him or reject him. The predestination of which Paul speaks was that all mankind be conformed to the likeness of the Son. Thus Christ becomes the “firstborn” among many brothers. God calls those who are willing to accept his offer and justifies them through the blood of Christ. These are the ones who ultimately will be glorified.

Based on all of this Paul lists all kinds of blessings and benefits which will come to God’s elect. The chaos of opposition and persecution may come from political, economic, military, or religious entities but nothing can separate us from the love of God or void his promises. Instead, “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us,” Rom. 8:30. How are we “more than conquerors?” The reason is that “All things work together for good for those who love the Lord.” We must see that Paul’s statements about election and predestination are also addressed to “those who love the Lord.” He is going to present a series of conclusions based on what he has just said. These conclusions are introduced by a question, “What shall we say to these things?” This is followed by two rhetorical questions. “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” The answers to these two questions are overwhelmingly obvious to Paul but he enumerates some of the political, economic, military, and religious forces which were working against the Christian’s hope. He concludes that nothing which is aligned against God’s people can ever separate them from the love of God. Trouble, hardship persecution, nakedness, famine, sword, death, life, angels, demons, things present, the future, power of any kind, height or depth, “nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (8:35-39)

Chapter X

Israel and the Sovereignty of God (1)

Rom. 9:1-29

A Brief Overview of Rom. 9-11.

With chapter 9 we begin the final installment of Paul's polemic. The first 8 chapters developed the topic of justification by grace through faith and the life-changing consequences of this teaching. In that section Paul dealt with a whole group of questions which might arise among his original audience as well as our own contemporaries. The final section of Paul's argument, 9:1—11:32, deals with five important topics: (1) Paul's own concern for Israel, (2) the sovereignty of God, (3) Israel's misunderstanding of her own mission, (4) Israel's rejection of Christ and the gospel, and (5) the future hope of the Hebrew people. In 11:33-36 Paul gives us a beautiful doxology to conclude the argument section of the epistle.

We can safely assume that there were mixed feelings within the Roman church as the people heard chapters 9-11 read to them. Monumental and many faceted questions certainly remained in their minds as they contemplated Paul's instructions and corrections in chapters 1-8. We can imagine them asking, "Paul, in view of all that you have said, what are we to think concerning the long and glorious history of Israel? Has God now cast away his people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Has God's word and his promise to Abraham failed?" These and corollary questions deserve our closest attention but the answers are by no means simple. Some scholars consider the content and approach of chapters 9-11 non-Pauline, and they have speculated that these sections came from another hand, a later editor who added them, or perhaps they were written by Paul at a later date. However, there is no manuscript evidence to support such theories of an addition. Properly viewed these chapters fit well into the argument Paul is making and they deal directly with the problems which the Jews had concerning the role of their own nation, Christ, the gospel, and Christianity.

After all is completed in chapters 9-11, unanswered questions certainly remained for them as they do for us. Paul recognized the privileged position of the Jews but he drew a distinction between this and their assumed right to preferential treatment as God's chosen (favorite?) people. They must deal with their own need of forgiveness and justification just as the Gentiles must deal with theirs. This was not a new way of salvation but the further development of salvation as God had purposed from the beginning. The Jews did not understand how their calling and election fit into this scheme of things. In these chapters, 9-11, we will see the exegetical importance of strict adherence to the context. If we disregard this we will become hopelessly lost in a maze of questions about personal election to salvation rather than Paul's message of the sovereignty of God in the fulfillment of his purpose in Christ. Chapters 9-11 address important aspects of God's plan.

All of this bears directly on the question of why the Jews rejected Christ and the gospel and why the "Jewish Messiah" ultimately became primarily the "Messiah of the Gentiles." Paul himself, though Jewish, was the apostle to the Gentiles as he mentions three times in this letter (1:5, 11:13, and 15:16). In order to deal with these and other questions he presents a well structured argument. From the Old Testament Scriptures he will attempt to show them the truth of God's

purpose for Israel. First (9:1-29), he deals with the sovereignty of God. Next (9:30—10:21) our writer addresses the unbelief of the nation of Israel and the acceptance of the Gentiles as part of God's original plan and promise. Following this (11:1-10) he speaks briefly of the symbolic character of the Old Testament "Remnant of Israel" and he applies that principle to the present situation with Israelite Christianity. Finally (11:11-32), he tackles question of Israel's current and future hope. His doxology (11:33-36), concludes the argument section of the book.

Israel's past glories and Paul's sorrow. 9:1-5

These verses, 1-5, are personal, and form a preface to this final section of the apostle's argument. He describes his sorrow for his nation. His condemnation of works salvation did not come from a heart of arrogance or disdain for them but he suffers unceasing anguish because of their rejection of the gospel. He has shown that the gospel came to the Jew first but also to the Gentile. God has not cast off his people but has exercised his sovereign right to make choices in order to bring about the justification of all mankind, not just the Jews.

Commentary

He begins in verses 1-2 with an affirmation that he is honest and sincere in what he says. "I tell you the truth, I lie not." He used similar expressions in I Tim. 2:7, II Cor. 11:31, and Gal. 1:20. He calls the Holy Spirit as witness to the truth of what he has said and is saying. He wanted them to know his sincerity and that he was not an antinomian when it came to the Law of Moses. To Timothy he wrote later, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully," (I Tim. 1:8). Instead, he told the Roman church that the Law must be understood and respected in its proper role and in its historical context. He uses two strong expressions to describe his anguish for Israel. First he says that his **λυπη** (*lupē*), that is his "sorrow or grief," is **μεγαλη** (*megalē*) meaning "deep or profound." Literally translated Paul says that he is profoundly hurt and he grieves over Israel's rejection of Christ. Next he emphasizes this thought by using the phrase **αδιαλειπτος οδυνη** (*adialeiptos odunē*) which means "incessant or continual pain." The severity of his condemnation of Israel in the previous chapters is tempered by the grief and pain which he experiences in his thoughts of their rejection of Christ. James Denney simply says, "Paul cannot find words strong enough to convey his feelings." (Denney, *op. cit.*, p. 657.)

In verse 3 the apostle again expresses the depth of his anxiety for his countrymen. Did Paul actually say he would be willing to be cut off from Christ if it would do any good in saving his countrymen? Or did he express this figuratively, knowing that such a thing was impossible but he found no other adequate way to express his anxiety for his unsaved countrymen. He says he could wish himself an anathema from Christ for the benefit of his fleshly brethren. The Greek text, **ηυχομην γαρ αναθεμα** (*ēuchomēn gar anathema*), is very expressive and intense. The first word, **ηυχομην** (*ēuchomēn*) is the imperfect tense of **ευχομαι**. It means "to wish very strongly, to beg or to pray to God" as in Acts 26:29 and Gal. 4:20. Its use in the imperfect tense gives it continual action in past time. Paul uses the word **αναθεμα** (*anathema*) here and in Gal. 1:8-9 where he pronounces a curse against those who pervert the gospel. The word originally meant "a thing devoted to God or that which is set up in the temple." The translators of the LXX used it almost exclusively to describe that which is devoted to God for the purpose of destruction rather than a thing devoted to God for a worshipful or good use. In Lev. 27:28-29, Num. 21:3,

Deut. 13:16-18, and elsewhere in the LXX the word is used to describe the destruction of some of the cities of Canaan when Israel invaded the land. In these passages the word obviously means “devoted to God for destruction.” A cognate of this word is sometimes used in the LXX, to refer to an animal destined for sacrifice. The emphasis is that the animal’s irreversible fate is death. In New Testament times the word referred to that which was devoted to God for destruction without any possibility of redemption. This vividly demonstrates the depth of Paul’s sincerity and the pain he felt for his nation’s rejection of Christ but it is not without its problems. Verses 4-5 describe the grandeur of the nation of Israel in God’s plan and purpose for them. Finally, it was through their nation that the Messiah – the Christ – would come.

God’s sovereign choices. 9:6-13

The first problem Paul addresses is the supposed failure of God’s word. God’s rejection of Israel was not evidence of a failure of his promise to Abraham. This serves as an introduction to his treatment of other questions which might arise. The first eight chapters showed God’s concern for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews. It comes as no surprise that he says that the term “Israel” includes more than just the physical descendants of Jacob. This introduces the problem of identity. For Paul, the term “Israel” referred to all of God’s children whether Jew or Gentile. All of this presents questions about the meaning of Israel’s election. Was it limited to physical descendants or is there also a spiritual Israel?

Commentary

Verse 6 begins with Paul’s statement that God’s word (his promise) has not failed. Instead, there is a misunderstanding on Israel’s part concerning their role in God’s plan. The coming of Christ did not change God’s word. Instead, that event was the fulfillment of his word. In Israel’s history the misconception arose that the nation would receive preferential treatment. Jeremiah warned against this mindset while the false prophets predicted that no evil thing would come. In the altercations which Jesus had with the Jews this misconception is evident. See Jn. 8:31-41.

Paul mentions three important things as he addresses these issues, each one emphasizing the sovereignty of God. First, there is the question of Israelite identity. Who is a true Israelite? He makes the blanket statement that not all who are the physical descendants of Israel are included in God’s definition of his people. His prime illustration of this is Isaac’s situation. God had promised Abraham that “in your seed shall all of the families of the earth be blessed.” Problem: Abraham was old, and Sarah was barren. Ishmael, the child (seed) of Abraham and Hagar was not to be the answer to the problem. In addition, Abraham had other descendants with Keturah, his second wife, and became the father of six additional children (Gen. 25:1-2). Neither the descendants of Abraham and Hagar (Ishmael) nor the descendants of Abraham and Keturah were counted as “Israel” although they were Abraham’s seed. Therefore God had to make a choice concerning the one through whom the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled.

Verse 7 continues this development showing that it was God’s sovereign right to select certain ones to participate in the ultimate fulfillment of his promise. A close examination of the circumstances shows that God had not violated his word and his promise had not failed. The Edomites, the Midianites, the Ishmaelites, and others were all the descendants of Abraham. From these

facts Paul's concludes that the sovereign God exercised his right to choose those through whom he would fulfill his promise. Based on this it is easy to see that natural descent is not the only factor to be considered. We notice that Paul uses the word "Israel" not just to designate the physical descendants of the three great patriarchs but also to designate all believers whether Jews or Gentiles. With this Paul introduces the concept of an "Israel of faith" which is made up of people of all ethnicities and nationalities. In Gal. 6:16 he refers to "the Israel of God" identifying all of God's people. His dual use of the term "Israel" is confusing at times. He will show that, within this context, God had to make choices in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham. The gospel came to "the Jew first and also to the Greek" and in all that Paul says about Israel according to the flesh and spiritual Israel he is showing the unity of these two entities.

Verses 8-9 give Paul's observation based on the facts of his previous statement. It is not just Abraham's natural descendants who are God's children but "the children of promise" are spiritual offspring of Abraham and therefore heirs of the covenant promise. Why is this true? Because these individuals, whether Jews or Gentiles, are of the faith of Abraham as Paul has described in chapter 4.

The word **σπέρμα** (*sperma*), translated "offspring or seed," may refer to Jesus Christ as the singular seed of whom Paul was speaking. This would be similar to the statement in Gal. 3:16: "the Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." Commentators are divided on this. Sanday is representative of one point of view, contending that in verses 7-8 Paul uses the word **σπέρμα** (*sperma*) in its collective sense, *i.e.* the whole nation of Israel as was promised in Gen. 15:5. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243.) Fitzmyer is representative of the other viewpoint that in verses 7-8, just as in Gal. 3:16, Paul is referring to Christ as the ultimate seed. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 560-561.) The word **σπέρμα** (*sperma*) is singular, but the singular is frequently used to identify all of the descendants of a person. In Gal. 3:16 Paul contrasts the Greek singular and the Greek plural in order to make his point.

It is certain that in verse 7 Paul is speaking of the "children of Abraham" who came through the lineage of Isaac rather than Ishmael. However, it is difficult to determine his use of the word **σπέρμα** (*sperma*), "seed" in this verse. He may be referring to the physical descendants through Isaac or he may be referring to Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose. The sentence makes perfectly good sense either way and both interpretations present an accurate message. Perhaps this is the reason Paul phrased it as he did.

In verse 8 he explains this a little more clearly by saying, "This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants." In this way Paul merges the fleshly descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "Israel according to the flesh," with those of the Gentiles who have the faith of Abraham and thereby become the children of the promise. Together they are "the Israel of God" as he called them in Gal. 6:16. A little later we will see how Paul uses some of this as he addresses physical Israel and that nation's role in bringing the Messiah into the world.

In verse 9 the apostle recalls a statement from Gen. 18:10 where God told Abraham that "about this time next year" Sarah would have a son. In view of the fact that both Ishmael and Isaac

were the offspring (seed) of Abraham, God had to make a choice concerning the one through whom the promise would be fulfilled. As already stated, Abraham was the father of six others children born to his second wife Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4). In the case of Ishmael and Isaac, the Lord said, “In Isaac shall your seed be called.” God’s sovereignty is the key issue throughout this discussion. Sometimes his choices appear to be arbitrary but this does not infringe on man’s freewill in acceptance of Christ and salvation. We must remember that personal salvation is not the topic under discussion here. It is the sovereign election of those who were to be in the lineage of the Messiah through whom God’s promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled.

In verses 10-13 our writer emphasizes his point by calling attention to the Old Testament accounts of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah was pregnant with twins. Before they were born God made a choice concerning the one through whom he would accomplish his purpose as promised to Abraham. Jacob was chosen (elected) and the statement was made that “the elder shall serve the younger,” Gen. 28:10.

The Greek word **εκλογη** (*eklogē*), which is a cognate of **εκλεγω** (*eklegō*), is usually translated “election” in English versions. This is a compound word made up of **εκ**, meaning “out of or from” and **λεγω** meaning “to utter words, to speak, to declare, or to say.” When compounded the word came to mean “to select, to choose from among a group, or to elect.” Because of general Protestant emphasis on predestination and foreordination, many people believe that the translation “election” refers to salvation. The word is used about 6 times in the New Testament, almost all of which are found in Paul’s writings. Other cognates of the root word are used with relative frequency in the New Testament. This is not a religious word but a secular word, the emphasis of which is “choice or selection” and the Greeks used it to refer to a choice or selection made for any purpose. So, once again, we must remember that this was not said about the personal salvation of anyone but it was a statement of God’s sovereignty in order to accomplish his purpose in bringing Christ into the world. Hundreds of years after the births of Esau and Jacob, after Esau’s descendants (the Edomites) had become an evil nation which had fought against Israel, God made the statement “Jacob [Israel] I have loved but Esau [Edom] I have hated.” Mal. 1:2-3. Why was the choice made that the elder shall serve the younger?” Once again, let’s notice that it was not in reference to Jacob’s eternal personal election for salvation or for the predetermination of Esau for eternal condemnation but, “in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls – she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger,’” (9:11). This choice was made before either of the twins had done anything right or wrong so it was not based on their goodness or wickedness. Instead, it was God’s exercise of his sovereign power to bring about his ultimate purpose in Christ’s sacrifice of atonement which resulted in the offer of salvation to all mankind, “to the Jew first [Israel] and also to the Greek [Gentile].” The promise to Abraham was, “In you all of the families of the earth will be blessed,” Gen. 12:3, so choices had to be made all along the way in order to bring that about. In Mal. 1:2-3 God saw the evil of the Edomites, which had characterized their history, and he said, “Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated.” This was not the announcement of the fact of election or predestination in Malachi; it was an announcement of the fact of the history of the Edomites.

Is God unjust? 9:14-21

Verse 14 presents another important question. “Is God unjust in making these choices?” Paul

anticipates that some of his recipients would entertain this question so again he reverts to the diatribe style of argumentation. God constantly affirmed his love for the Israelites because they were the people through whom his promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled (Gen. 12:1-3). In other instances, in order to fulfill his purpose in Christ, God made choices for the benefit of Israel, e.g. the promise to bring them back from captivity.

In verse 15 Paul made reference to the Lord's statement to Moses at the time of the worship of the golden calf at Mt. Sinai. God's anger led him to resolve to destroy Israel and raise up another nation through Moses. Moses intervened on behalf of Israel and the Lord changed his mind (Ex. 32:9-10). In Ex. 33:19-20 God said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It is the Lord's sovereign right to show mercy to some while punishing others. In this case, the worship of the calf was an evil deed, and God asserted his right to punish those who participated in it rather than destroying the whole nation of Israel.

In verse 16 Paul shows that God's choices were not based on man's goodness but on God's mercy. He had the right to destroy the entire nation but did not choose to do so. Paul now turns his attention to Pharaoh and the Egyptians. In these circumstances God showed mercy to Israel but he punished Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The apostle uses Moses' encounter with Pharaoh as another Old Testament example of God's sovereign act (Ex. 4:21 and 9:16). It appears that God acted arbitrarily in his choice of Jacob over Esau because that choice was made before either of them had been born. Did God do the same with reference to Pharaoh?

In order to understand verses 16-18 more clearly we need to summarize a little of the history of Egypt during this period. At the burning bush God commissioned Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to release the people and let them go. At the burning bush God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so he will not let the people go." (Ex. 4:21.) Notice that this statement was made prior to Moses' encounter with Pharaoh. At times it is said that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 8:32, 9:34-35) but at other times Exodus says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 9:12, 10:1, 10:20, 10:27, 11:10, 14:8).

There are chronological problems for this period, and scholars are divided concerning the exact time of the bondage and the exodus. The Biblical statement that the Israelite slaves built the cities of Rameses and Pithom (Ex. 1:11) are generally thought to indicate that this points to Ramses II as the Pharaoh of the exodus. Many archaeologists, including G. Ernest Wright, believe that the Biblical text and Egyptian archaeological history favor this. (G. Ernest Wright, *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, Revised Edition, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 37-38.) If that is correct, Pharaoh Seti I was the Pharaoh of the oppression (and he was Moses' "stepfather"). Ramses II (who was Moses' "stepbrother") succeeded his father and was the Pharaoh of the exodus. In Ex. 2:23-25 we have the notice of Pharaoh death and the groaning of Israel because of their slavery. This was Pharaoh Seti I. His very capable son, Ramses II succeeded him and he was the Pharaoh who was confronted by Moses. In Ex. 5:1-21 we have the account of how Pharaoh Ramses II greatly increased the misery of the bondage.

The account of the plagues in Ex. 7-12 shows that the Egyptians viewed the plagues as a power struggle. The Egyptian magicians, wise men, and sorcerers were summoned to perform similar

feats (Ex. 7:11, 7:22, 8:7, 8:18-19, 9:11). Egyptian religion strongly emphasized the power of their various gods and of the king. The monotheism of the Hebrews would probably have been viewed by the Egyptians as a weakness. Although the Egyptian magicians were also showing some sort of signs, they finally gave up in defeat (Ex. 9:11.) This background is important because it demonstrates Pharaoh's determined opposition against God and Pharaoh's continued challenge of God's power.

In verse 17 Paul refers to Ex. 9:15-17 where God told Moses to tell Pharaoh, "For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." We must notice that God did not tell Moses that Pharaoh was made king in order for God to show his power. However, God, seeing the evil of this king, gave him power and prestige so that Pharaoh and his nation would see that the God of the Hebrews had no rivals. God's power over Pharaoh was indisputable. Elevating this evil king to such heights and giving him such power provided the exact context in which all Israel, the Egyptian people, and Pharaoh himself could witness the vastly superior power of God. When we consider the hundreds of years of Egyptian polytheistic influence over Israel, this must have been a great confidence builder for the Hebrew slaves. We can imagine them saying, "Our God is more powerful than the king of Egypt and all of the gods of the Egyptians." There is every reason to see the plagues as a power struggle from the Egyptian's point of view.

God's work in hardening of Pharaoh's heart can be understood best, not as an act of foreordination, as is popular in Calvinism today, but as a consequence of the evil deeds of an evil king. Pharaoh had performed much evil during the enslavement of Israel, all of which was prior to his confrontation with Moses. In this we see God working through the events of a king's personal evil life in order to complete his own plan of bringing Israel to the Promised Land. All of these events were building blocks in the performance of God's ultimate purpose in Christ. It is not dealing with the salvation or condemnation of Pharaoh. Joseph Fitzmyer says that Pharaoh's "very obstinacy was a means that God used to deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Ultimately, the hardhearted Pharaoh contributed to the proclamation of God's name in the world. . . . God's freedom and sovereignty in the choice of instruments to achieve his end are made manifest. Thus Pharaoh became an instrument whereby God's power (**δυναμις**) [*dunamis*] was manifested and his name (**ὄνομα**) [*onoma*] proclaimed." (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 567-568.)

The view generally held by the Jews of Paul's day was that God gave Israel preferential treatment because they were the chosen people. The extra-biblical Jewish literature of that time confirmed the idea of this treatment and God's lack of concern about the Gentiles. Such writings as *The Psalms of Solomon* (c. 2nd – 1st century B.C.), *The Books of Jubilees* (c. 100 B.C.), *The Apocalypse of Baruch* (c. A.D. 70), and others have passages which confirm this. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.) As a Pharisee, Paul would probably have held to this type of doctrine concerning Israel. As a Christian he still held to the doctrine of election but with a very different application than God's love for Israel and his preferential treatment of the chosen nation. It is imperative that we remember that the election of which Paul is speaking centers in God's ultimate purpose in Christ and his inclusion of the Gentiles as "faith heirs" of Abraham. Therefore verse 18 says that God has the right to "have mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and

he hardens whom he wants to harden.” This is not a capricious or arbitrary hardening but one which demonstrates the sovereignty of God.

In verses 19-21 Paul resorts to another diatribe as he pictures the Jews asking, “Why does God still blame us (unbelieving Jews)? After all, who can resist his will?” Logically, this is a reasonable question, but it shows a Jewish misunderstanding of the process. His first answer is, “Who are you to talk back to God?” and then he asks (verse 20), “Shall the thing formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why have you made me this way?’” This appears to have been taken from Is. 29:16. However, Paul contends that the potter has the right to make a piece of pottery for a common use or for a noble use. God has used evil men and nations to accomplish his purposes without ever violating their freedom. The nations of Assyria and Babylon were used by God to punish his people while the pagan king Cyrus was used to restore God’s people, ending the Babylonian the Exile. In this event Cyrus was called “God’s anointed” (Is. 45:1). The question in verse 21 regarding the potter and clay was not, “Why did you make me a pot?” but “Why did you make me an unshapely or unattractive pot instead of making me a beautiful vase?” In more colloquial terms one of them might have asked, “God, why did you not give me musical talents as you gave someone else? or “God, why did you not give me a great intellectual or scientific mind as you gave to someone else?”

The point is that God had the sovereign right to choose Israel, give them his covenant, guide them, deliver his Law to them, etc. in order to fulfill his promise to Abraham. In like manner, he had the right not to choose another nation or person for that work. In the very nature of things, God had to make choices in order to fulfill his promise to bless all families of the earth. For example, he had to choose one particular woman to be the mother of Jesus. He could not have chosen two or more women for this function. Therefore we must see these things not only in reference to God’s sovereign right but remember that these choices were mandatory for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham.

Old Testament testimony about Israel, the Gentiles, and God’s Choices. 9:22-29

In this section Paul continue his observations on God’s choices by looking at Old Testament prophetic statements. Still, there are difficult phrases in these quotations. Paul speaks of “vessels [objects] of God’s wrath” in contrast to “vessels [objects] of his mercy.” He also speaks of “vessels of honor” in contrast to “vessels fitted for destruction.” This refers to verse 21 and Paul’s reference to the potter’s freedom to make a vessel of whatever shape he desires.

Commentary

In verse 22 there is an interesting but somewhat confusing Greek construction as Paul introduces these things. The expression *εἰ δε θελων* (*ei de thelōn*) can be translated either “because he wishes” to show his wrath or “although he wishes” to show his wrath. The first is held by a relatively few scholars and commentators as they contend that the purpose of God is to display his wrath both freely and immediately as his reaction against man’s sins.

Most commentators hold that the second translation as more suitable to the context of chapters 9 and 10. Paul says that God’s wrath is tempered with God’s restraint and the apostle uses the

phrase *εν πολλῇ μαχροθυμια* (*en pallē machrothumia*) which is translated “in much longsuffering.” The sense of the passage is that God exercised great restraint and patience as he postponed the display of his wrath at sinful conduct. Leander Keck analyzes this thought under three general headings. First, Paul states that God desired “to show his wrath and make his power known” (9:22). Second, in order to do this effectively God was willing to patiently put up with those “objects of his wrath – prepared for destruction” *i.e.*, those whose behavior fitted them for destruction (9:22). Third, by doing this God not only shows his wrath against sin but also made “the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy” (9:23). Keck also makes this important observation: “The quotations that follow show that in this whole chapter Paul is *not* talking about predestination or double predestination with respect to an individual’s salvation, though this chapter later became the quarry from which those doctrines were extracted and hewn. He is talking about groups of people.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-238.) Once again we are reminded that God’s purpose in Christ is his objective, not salvation or condemnation of individuals.

The remainder of this section, verses 25-29 refer to Old Testament prophecies which support Paul’s statements. He quotes Hosea twice (2:23 and 1:10) and Isaiah twice (Is. 10:22-23 and 1:9). The idea is introduced in verse 24 where Paul says, “not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles.” In Hos. 1:6 Hosea was told to name his daughter Lo-Ruhamah (“not pitied”) and in Hos. 1:8 he was told that the next child was to be called Lo-Ammi (“not my people”). These names were to apply symbolically to Israel because of Israel’s apostasy. The reverse of this is seen in Hos. 1:10 where he says, “in the place where it was said, ‘you are not my people’ they shall be called ‘sons of the living God.’” Paul uses this to show that Hosea’s statement is referring to the Gentiles who were once not part of the chosen people – “not my people” – but are now called “sons of the living God.” They will be called “my loved ones” although they were previously “not my loved ones.” Hosea originally spoke to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. These people were part of the chosen nation but they had violated the covenant, worshipped idols, and had departed from God. The history of that time and the writings of the prophets show that even in their apostasy the people of Israel continued to offer sacrifices to the Lord, considering him just one more god among the many gods in their pantheon. Consequently, they still considered their nation to be God’s chosen people.

Isaiah’s statement is somewhat different. Isaiah had predicted that relatively few Israelites would be delivered, survive, or “be saved.” He did this by using the symbolism of the remnant. “Though the number is Israelites be like the sand by the sea, only the remnant will be saved.” The use of the word “saved” in the Old Testament does not usually refer to eternal salvation but the deliverance from enemies or survival. Even in the deepest apostasy of Israel and Judah there seems to have always been a slim glimmer of hope because there was a small number of faithful who remained. For example, in great discouragement, Elijah said to God, “I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.” God’s reply to this was, “Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.” (I Kgs. 19:14-18). Paul uses the idea of remnant to illustrate his point. If God had not preserved a few faithful, Isaiah says that Israel and Judah would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah. It would be through the “remnant” that God’s purpose would ultimately be accomplished. In the purpose of God, all are called to accept the Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles but Paul recognizes that only a few Jews are of such an accepting mind. We must remember that it is not correct to put all of the Jews into a category of objectors to the gospel. Although these

appear to be the vast majority, some of the Jews became loyal followers of Christ and would probably have had no trouble understanding Paul's injunctions. It is interesting that some in the Qumran community considered the community itself to be the saving remnant among the Jews and the true "keepers of orthodoxy."

Chapter XI

Israel and the Sovereignty of God (2)

Rom. 9:30 – 10:21

Israel has stumbled in its pursuit or righteousness. 9:30-33.

The chapter division at 9:33 causes us to lose the connection with chapter 10. Scholars are divided concerning this, some believing that there is a break in thought at 10:1, and that 9:30-33 should be considered an extension of the previous section, 9:1-29. Others believe that Paul begins a new thought in 9:30, continuing it on through chapter 10. We need to keep in mind that all through chapters 9-11 we have a very close argument concerning God's mission and purpose for Israel, the misunderstanding of the people concerning this, and the place and function of the Israelite nation in the whole scheme of things. God's sovereignty is the foundation topic throughout chapters 9-11. In the various sections there is a change of emphasis but the basic theme remains the same.

We must also remember that Paul is not saying that the Law was a sort of "Old Testament plan of salvation" while the gospel is the "New Testament plan of salvation." Justification does not come by the removal of one law (the Law of Moses) and the instituting of another law (the law of Christ). Instead, justification comes about by our trust in the sacrifice of Christ not by adherence to any law. The "newness of life" is not our means of justification any more than the Law of Moses was ancient Israel's means of justification. The "newness of life" is our expression of gratitude for Christ's sacrifice, not our means of justification.

Paul's censure of the Jewish people was not because they were consciously rebelling against God but because they did not understand that Christ, not the Jewish nation, was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. The apostle was primarily attempting to correct their misunderstanding. In II Cor. 3:15-16 he uses the expression that "a veil lies over their hearts." The tragedy which Paul faced with the Jews was not very different from that which we see in our own world. Currently the lack of understanding of Scripture brings the same tragedy and it needs to be treated with the same sense of compassion, love, and prayer as Paul exemplified among his own "kinsmen according to the flesh." Compare Paul's compassionate approach to the error of his fellow Jews with the severity of some of the Old Testament prophets as they delivered God's message to the idolatrous Israelites.

Commentary

Paul begins this block, verses 30-33, with another contrast. Israel, who pursued righteousness, failed to attain it but the Gentiles, who were not originally in the pursuit of righteousness, arrived at it through faith rather than through meritorious works of the Law. This appears to be backwards from the vantage point of the Jews. This forthright promise to Abraham and the purpose of the chosen nation was a stumbling block to the Jew and they had a difficult time understanding and accepting their true role in God's plan. Paul's major premise is that God has not been unfaithful or unjust in the fulfillment of his promise. However, Israel's misunderstanding and infidelity must be seen as the major contributor to the equation. Notice that up until now Paul

has emphasized God's sovereign actions but beginning at verse 30 he emphasizes Israel's failure and infidelity. It is important to remember that Paul, in his argument in this block (9:30—10:21), does not set aside God's sovereignty but he shows that the infidelity of Israel also plays a prominent role.

The irony of the situation was that some pagans had left their unbelief and pursued righteousness through trust in Christ's atoning sacrifice. Neither the Law nor salvation by works was a problem to these pagans. On the other hand, the people of Israel had been so steeped in the Law that many of them misunderstood its intended function and purpose. To complicate the matter their misconception of their own worthiness ("we are the children of Abraham") and their "right" to preferential treatment meant that they gave little or no consideration to faith in the sacrifice of Christ as the only source of righteousness. The Gentiles sought righteousness by faith while Israel sought it by Law.

So Israel's pursuit of righteousness never attained its goal. In 9:31 Paul uses the Greek word *εφθασεν* (*ephthasen*), translated "attained." This is the aorist tense of *φθάνω* (*phthanō*) and it is usually translated "to attain, arrive, or succeed." However, it can also be translated "to precede or go ahead of" (as in I Thess. 4:15) or "to advance, arrive, or make progress toward," (as in Phil. 3:16). The emphasis of the word is "to catch up with." Paul pictures Israel as continually pursuing righteousness but never able to attain it (catch up with it) because they failed to see its basis in faith rather than works.

At this point we need to mention the fact that in verses 30-33 Paul is emphasizing justification (righteousness) rather than God's purpose in Christ as he had developed in 9:1-29. Justification by works of the Law was never the purpose of the Law so Israel's pursuit of righteousness by that means was fruitless. However, it was inseparably tied to their misunderstanding of God's purpose and their own national function. God's sovereign choices were designed to accomplish his purpose in Christ and consequently justification by faith was applicable to Jews as well as Gentiles. Verses 32-33 say that the Jews "stumbled over the stumbling stone." Paul quotes from Is. 8:14 and 28:16 although he does not give the exact wording of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Paul's personal feelings toward Israel. 10:1-4

Paul connects 9:30-33 to 10:1-4 as he speaks of his own deep desire for the salvation of Israel. He had been a Pharisee and was well acquainted with the devotion of so many of his countrymen. Their zeal for God was obvious and noteworthy. In verse 1, as he expresses the depths of his concern for his fellow Israelites, Paul uses the Greek word *ευδοκία* (*eudokia*), translated "desire." It is one of the relatively few words in the New Testament which is found mostly in Christian and Jewish religious writings (both Biblical and non-biblical). It is generally used to refer to one's relationship with God and it was seldom employed in secular writings. In this verse Paul appears to link his thoughts to 1:16-17 when he speaks of the gospel being God's power "unto salvation" (*εις σωτηριαν* – *eis sōtērian*). When he says, "I bear them witness" he is using legal terminology as would be used in a court of law. He is an "eye-witness" of Christ and has the right to offer this testimony.

Paul uses the word *ζηλον* (*zēlon*) which is translated "zeal." An interesting thing about this

word is that it was not frequently used by the Greeks, but was found rather frequently among the Jews. It is used to reflect the zeal of God, of evil people, and of good people. It is not a moral or ethical word but it describes the intense activity of God or an individual in any situation. This word was especially appropriate for Paul since he is actually complimenting the Jews for their intense work and feeling for God but the Jewish zeal was wrapped up in the Law and the old covenant instead of Christ. Much misunderstanding came as a result of this. In Acts 21:17-25 Paul returned to Jerusalem and met James and other believers who “had a zeal (ζηλον – *zēlon*) for the law.” They had received word that Paul was trying to turn his countrymen away from Moses, telling them not to observe circumcision and teaching that they should not observe the customs of their nation. Although that report was not a true representation of Paul’s work, it appears to have been the interpretation that many Jewish people had placed on his teaching. This incident gives additional information concerning the attitude of Jewish Christians toward the Law and the gospel. Paul understood this since he had been zealous for the Law to the extent that he persecuted the church. See Phil. 3:6 and Acts 22:3-4 where he affirms this. These were some of the practical difficulties which emerged from the Jewish misunderstandings of which Paul speaks in Romans. The major problem was that their zeal was not grounded in knowledge. The universal character of the gospel was a difficult problem for them. Paul had stated their guilt and misunderstanding in severe terms but now he assures them of his sorrow and his deep desire for their salvation.

C.K. Barrett asks a simple but thought provoking question. “How did the most religious of all people come to reject their own Messiah, for whose coming they had so long waited?” (C.K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 195.) Paul has already spent eight chapters addressing various aspects of this question, but now he analyzes some different facets of this perplexing situation in which the Jews found themselves. What other nation had ever given itself so strongly to the God it believed in as Israel had? Their zeal and enthusiasm had been misdirected because of their misunderstanding of God’s purposes. Seeking righteousness was a noble pursuit but it was fruitless for Israel because it was not God’s righteousness which they sought. Instead, they thought that they could establish their own righteousness by adherence to the Law and its ceremonies. This was a problem for ancient Israel as it is also a problem for contemporary mankind. As strange as this may sound to some people, obedience is not the key to righteousness. Trust in Christ’s atonement is the key. Obedience follows this trust, but the Bible never considers our own goodness as the key to a right relationship with God. Paul understood this because he had lived in their shoes for years. In Gal. 1:13-14 he speaks of his extreme zeal for the “traditions of my fathers.” To the zealous Jew this included the Law. Their zeal stood in the way of submission to God. Zeal must have its foundation in knowledge which, unfortunately, is a lesson with which contemporary man also has a problem.

In verse 4 Paul says that Christ is “the end of the law.” He uses a broad word, *τελος* (*telos*), which can be translated in a variety of ways: “termination, conclusion, finish, end, fulfillment, or purpose.” A number of commentators believe that verse 4 shows that Christ is the “end of the law as a means of salvation.” However, Paul’s argument throughout the book is that no law of any kind has the power to change an unrighteous man into a righteous man. This comes through grace and is accepted by faith. The principle of justification by faith is not confined to the New

Testament, but was illustrated in the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:5, Gen. 15:6). Archibald T. Robertson says, “Christ put a stop to the law as a means of salvation. . . . Christ ended the law as a means of salvation ‘for everyone who believeth.’” (Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-388.) This statement implies that the Law of Moses was an Old Testament “plan of salvation” which is contrary to Paul’s basic thesis in Romans. Over and over he has shown that the purpose of the law was never to save but to define sin (Rom. 3:20) and to show sin as extremely evil (Rom. 7:13). We must notice that **νομος** (*nomos*), “law,” is without the article. This broadens the use of the word to include the principle of law, not confining it to the Law of Moses.

The word **τελος** (*telos*) is used in verse 4 and is translated “end” in almost all English versions. This seems to be the most appropriate translation in this context seems because Paul is speaking of Christ as the “termination of the law,” or that Christ “is the goal of the law.” There is an obvious connection between these interpretations and some commentators believe that each of these ideas applies. It is true that with Christ the Law of Moses came to an end or conclusion (termination) and Paul could very well have had this in mind. On the other hand, Christ as the “goal” of the law seems to fit the context a little better. Fitzmyer objects to the linking of these two applications. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 584.) Paul’s topic in this context is not the removal of the law but to show how Christ’s sacrifice accomplished the very thing which the law could not accomplish *i.e.* to impart righteousness to an otherwise hopeless sinful human race. Christ’s sacrifice was prefigured in many provisions of the Law just as the writer of Hebrews contends in Heb. 9-10. Ultimately Christ would demonstrate that his true objective was to impart righteousness to those who trusted in his atoning sacrifice. Earlier Paul showed how Israel had misunderstood its own mission as well as God’s purpose and this idea of Christ as “the goal” of the law enhances this argument.

The way of faith and the proclamation of the word. 10:5-21

In verses 5-8 Paul again calls on an Old Testament example. Moses defined the righteousness of the law to the people by saying, “The man who does these things will live by them.” This is a quotation from Lev. 18:5. Paul then gives a contrast between “righteousness of the law” as described by Moses and the “righteousness of faith” which is defined in the gospel. However his explanation of the working of faith is rather strange.

Moses, as an authority on the law, comes with the highest possible credentials, and his statement is simple. Legal righteousness can only be achieved by living completely within the limits of the Law. When citing the Old Testament defense of faith, Paul quotes from Moses and Isaiah contrasting the statement about legal righteousness – “legal righteousness says _____” but “faith righteousness says _____.” (10:5-6) A very important aspect of this argument is that Paul, prior to his conversion to Christ, took the same position as the Jewish people to whom he was writing. He was speaking out of his own experience of difficulty with Christianity and Christ as the end (**τελος** *telos*) of the law which had been the Jewish guiding light for many centuries.

The statement which Paul quotes concerning faith (Rom. 10:6) comes from Moses in Deut. 30:12. In that context Moses is speaking of the Law not of the gospel. Paul borrows Moses’ phrase and applies it to Christ, using the statement as an illustration of his point about faith, not as a proof text. Therefore this is not an explanation of the meaning of the Old Testament passage

but an illustrative use as is found in many other New Testament writings. Paul's statement "that is to bring Christ down" seems to imply that Paul is speaking specifically of the resurrection, a difficulty for many of the Jews. He seems to say, "Faith does not demand a physical descent of Christ in order for us to accept the reality of the resurrection."

The same applies to verse 7 where he asks, "Who will descend into the abyss, (that is to bring Christ up)?" This is a quotation from Deut. 30:13 where the phrase "beyond the sea" occurs. The connection which Paul makes is strictly illustrative, and the Old Testament context is basically ignored by the apostle. The Greek word *αβυσσος* (*abussos*) occurs here. It can be translated "deep, bottomless, bottomless pit, and abyss." The word is used only about nine times in the New Testament, most of which are in Revelation identifying the "bottomless pit" or "the abyss" in which Satan was confined for the thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). The word originally referred to deep unfathomable sea but later came to identify the abode of evil spirits or demons as in Lk. 8:31. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 288 and Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 2.) Again, Paul indirectly refers to the burial and resurrection of Christ as a matter of faith but he does not degrade the authenticity of that faith. We need to remember that "faith" as used by Paul involves complete trust in the atonement, not simply an acknowledgement of one's intellectual belief in Christ.

In verses 8-9 Paul says, "The word of faith is 'near you, in your mouth and in your heart.'" This is the word which has been proclaimed by Paul. He is addressing a person's confusion and lack of faith in the resurrection. His conclusion is that those who believe and confess will be saved. His well known statement follows in verse 10: "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Paul was not trying to give a systematic expression of conversion, but to articulate the true foundation of the Christian faith which was the basic problem for the Jewish people.

Verses 11-13 round out his argument. In verse 11 he goes to Is. 28:16 to illustrate his point. This is Isaiah's statement of the stone laid in Zion of which Peter speaks in I Pet. 2:6. He gives us two important observations which evoke his conclusion. First, our trust is to be in the atonement of Christ rather than a legal justification through the Law. Second, this opportunity for justification and salvation is open to all mankind, not only to Israel. Therefore, all who call on his name, whether Jew or Gentile, will be saved.

Verses 14-15 look at the practical side of Paul's argument concerning the misunderstandings of the Jews and their lack of faith. He does this again by using the diatribe – by asking a series of rhetorical questions emphasizing the necessity of evangelism and the spread of the word. He does not answer the questions, assuming that the answers are obvious but very important. He has said that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. The first question then is, "How can they call on him in whom they have not believed?" The obvious answer is, "They can't." Second, "How can they believe in one whom they have not heard?" Again, the obvious answer is, "They can't." Next, "How can they hear without someone to preach the gospel to them?" Again we have the same negative answer. Finally, "How can someone preach to them unless the preacher is sent?" In these things Paul shows that ignorance of the gospel is a dual responsibility. The potential hearer is responsible for hearing the word, but preachers and others are responsible for the spread of the gospel to the lost.

In addition, he shows that God has done, through Christ, all that he could do to provide justification (salvation), but the human responsibility cannot be neglected or overlooked. Judaism was not basically an evangelistic religion. It was confined to the nation of Israel. Children born of Jewish parents were part of the covenant nation. As they grew up they were taught about the God of Israel and the Lord's love for the chosen people. Paul shows that the significance of this was misunderstood by Israel. God's purpose for Israel did not include a sort of preferential treatment as the Jews had interpreted it but their nation was to bring the Savior into the world. Salvation, based on the Abrahamic promise, was originally designed for all men, not just for the Jews. This message of the gospel then needed to be proclaimed to Jew and Gentile alike. Many commentators believe that the expression in 10:14, "of whom they have not heard" should be translated "whom they have not heard" rather than "*of whom* they have not heard." This would mean that they were saying "How can we believe in someone whom we have not personally heard speak?" Therefore Paul is indirectly saying that the faithful preaching of the word of the gospel is the same as hearing the word from Christ himself. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 296.) In this series of questions Paul goes back to the basic starting point; Salvation comes from hearing the gospel and trusting in Christ's sacrifice of atonement.

The Greek word used here is κηρυσσοντος (*kērussontos*) which means "the open announcement of a message, the heralding of a message, or spreading the news." Here it is a present active participle which gives it the force of linear or continual action. He enhances his statement by another reference to Isaiah; "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news." Is. 52:7. The scenario presented by Paul underlines the sacred importance of preaching. Christ is speaking through the proclamation of the apostle and through our proclamation when we are faithful to the word. We must never lose sight of the power of the word. The preacher is only the courier of that word. The dynamic is Christ, not the courier.

Paul's lament for his unbelieving fellow Israelites continues in verses 16-21. Isaiah had asked, "Lord, who has believed our message?" (Is. 52:7) and Paul sees a strong similarity in his present situation. In Isaiah's day not all Israel accepted his report, so also not all Israel had accepted the good news of Christ. The word "Israel" or "Israelites" appears in verse 16 in some versions but it is not in the Greek text. Although it is generally assumed that Paul is still speaking to Israel, his language is so general that it could apply to Jews and Gentiles together. The phrase in the Greek text is ἀλλ οὐ πάντες υπηκούσαντὸ εὐαγγελίῳ (*all ou pantes upēkousan tō euaggeliō*) may also be translated, "but not all obeyed (harkened, listened, rendered submissive acceptance to) the gospel (good news)." Because of Paul's previous statements, some commentators believe that the word "obeyed" is probably a better translation than "accepted." This also fits well into the grief expressed in Isaiah's statement (52:7) which Paul quotes. In Isaiah, this is a sort of prelude to the suffering servant of Is. 53. Based on these facts, Paul says that the result is that faith comes by hearing the message of the gospel and this message comes through the proclamation of the word of God. There can be no acceptance of Christ unless it is accompanied by the knowledge of his word. Otherwise the mandate for evangelism loses its thrust.

This introduces another diatribe in verses 18-19. "Did they not all hear? Of course they did."

He then appropriates another Old Testament quotation in which he ignores the context. It becomes a slogan which fits his need and it comes from Ps. 19: 4. The psalmist speaks of the cosmic testimony of God's power in the creation of the universe but Paul sees this as an effective way to emphasize his point. "Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world." Paul asks again, "Did Israel not understand?" There is no guarantee that those who hear the gospel will respond favorably. Hearing doesn't always produce faith, but there can be no faith without first hearing the proclamation. His case in point is Moses' warning to Israel.

In Deut. 32:21, part of the Song of Moses, the statement comes from God, "They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding." Some commentators believe that Paul had been speaking generally to all people, both Jews and Gentiles, but it is evident that he is now speaking directly to the Hebrews. This brings up the question of Israel's zeal for God as mentioned in 10:2. They were deeply religious, had a good knowledge of the Law, observed the sacrifices, rituals and traditions, but they had little insight into God's purpose and their own function as part of his plan. They appear to have been relearning that which they had always been taught and were more interested in confirmation of their beliefs than in searching Scripture. (This sounds like our contemporary religious situation.) Moses and the prophets had continuously warned against this.

Isaiah shows God addressing this problem with the warning to Israel, "I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me," (Is. 65:1 quoted in Rom. 10:20). Although Paul did not quote Jeremiah, that prophet also addressed these problems. Israel could not conceive of terrible things happening to them but those things came. The message of the prophets was not complex nor was the message of the gospel. However, both were overlooked. The messages of the prophets were not hidden; they were public just as was the message of the gospel. The prophets' warnings of deprivation, crop failure, drought, national disaster, or captivity were not welcome, and the optimistic messages from the false prophets were much more attractive. Israel preferred the messages which never condemned their behavior, their worship, or even their idolatry. This attitude proved to be a key to their downfall. Once again this was happening to the chosen people but they still did not yield. Isaiah's statement in verse 21 summarizes the problem: "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." This is a quotation from Is. 65:2. The entire passage, Is. 65:1-5, presents a gloomy picture of apostasy and refusal to respond to God's warnings.

Chapter XII

Israel's Unbelief and Future Hope

Rom. 11:1-36

A Brief Overview of Chapter 11.

Paul addresses the issues in chapter 11 in four steps. First, he refutes the idea that God has rejected his own people, giving himself as a contemporary example of the truth that God has not abandoned the nation of Israel. In addition he speaks of Elijah's experience as an illustration of the minority (remnant) being faithful (11:1-6). Second, he speaks of the unbelieving majority who historically had rejected God's overtures. He recognizes that in his own day this situation continues (11:7-10). His third step deals with the Gentiles who are coming into a covenant relationship with God, as promised to Abraham, and the retrieval (grafting in) of Israel as individuals come to the Lord (11:11-24). Fourth, he returns to Israel's future in the whole scheme of things. Having completed the argument section of the book, in 11:33-36 he concludes with a doxology.

The Remnant. Has God Rejected His People? Rom. 11:1-6

Thus far, Paul has spent a considerable amount of his argument, especially in chapters 9 and 10, showing the errors, misunderstandings, and apostasies of Israel. In this block he will express hope for the future but it will not be enjoyed by the nation as a whole because most of Israel will continue in its unbelief. The remnant of which he speaks is similar to the relatively small number of Israelites who returned to the Promised Land following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. This brings up important questions. "Did Israel reject God?" or "Did God reject Israel?" In the broad context of Israel's history it is evident that God had not divorced himself from his chosen nation but the nation had left God. In Paul's day Israel's national arrogance had led to their rejection of Christ – this is evident in such altercations as John 8 – and Paul emphasizes their misunderstanding of God's intent for their nation. This final chapter of Paul's argument provides hope for those who come to Christ but that hope is not exclusively designed for Israel. It belongs to all mankind. However, in the final analysis, only a small number of Israelites will come to Christ. In 11:7 he begins to leave the topic of Israel's misunderstanding of its own mission and moves to the topic of their future salvation. Notice the difference in the way he deals with this new topic.

Commentary

In 11:1 Paul poses a question which was certainly on the mind of many of his addressees. "Did God reject his people?" This is the opposite of Ps. 94:14 where the psalmist makes the statement "For the Lord will not reject his people: he will never forsake his inheritance." Earlier in that psalm the poet had spoken of the enemies of the Lord's people who were jubilant over their successes against Israel. The poet then gave assurance to his readers that the Lord will never reject his people. Samuel had made a similar statement in his farewell address to Israel, I Sam. 12:22. Paul appears to present his question in a way that would arrest the attention of the Jews. Such a rejection by God was impossible. Many of the things which Paul had written in the earlier part of the epistle could have raised the question about God's rejection of Israel. This may have been

particularly present with the more resistant elements of Judaism. The apostle's answer is simple. Once again he uses his favorite very emphatic negative – **μη γινωιτο** (*mē genoito*) – “absolutely not, under no circumstances could this be.” He follows this by referring to himself. He is an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, and from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul was living proof that God had not disowned his people.

In verse 2 he makes the emphatic statement, “God did not reject his people whom he foreknew.” The phrase, “whom he foreknew” is frequently taken out of context to argue that Paul is speaking of the foreknowing and election of the Israelite nation, or certain elect ones within that nation, for their salvation. (See Murray, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 67-68 for more specifics on this topic.) On the other hand, Sanday shows that the language must refer to the nation of Israel, not to certain ones within the nation nor can it refer to “spiritual Israel” as some have supposed. “The reference in this chapter is throughout to the election of the nation as a whole, and therefore the words cannot have a limiting sense.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-310.) We must remember that God's election of Israel and their function in this election was not for the salvation of the nation but for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world. This was the basic misunderstanding with which Paul dealt in chapters 9-11 and it remains a major misunderstanding with many people in our own time. In 9:14ff the apostle had spoken of God's justice in reference to Pharaoh and the exodus. Even in his dealings with Israel's apostasy God showed justice and mercy.

In 11:2b-5 the apostle says that throughout Israel's history of apostasy and unbelief a few had always been faithful. His prime illustration of this is Elijah who thought that he was the only faithful one left, and his countrymen wanted to kill him. God told him that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal (I Kgs. 19:18). “So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.” The word **χαρις** (*charis*), “grace” is not confined to God's gift of salvation but it is used broadly to refer to each of God's gifts. Paul is referring to those Israelites who remained faithful in the time of Elijah, giving him assurance that he was not alone in his fidelity to God. However, there is nothing here to imply “unconditional election” for salvation. Rather, it was the practice of their freewill not to follow Baal but to follow God. As we have already seen, the words “chosen” and “election” are not always attached to salvation. Paul has shown throughout chapters 9-10 that God made choices in order to accomplish his purposes, particularly concerning the coming of the Messiah. Even in what seemed to be a hopeless situation for the Jews of Paul's day, there were a few who had responded to the directives of God just as there had been throughout Israel's history. All of this was evidence that God had not cast off his people. The nation would still be the vehicle through which God would accomplish his purposes for all mankind.

Verse 6 shows that God displayed his mercy to some individuals, not because they were eternally elected to salvation or because of their own personal godliness (works), but because they, acting out of their own freewill, responded to the call of God. Thus they were part of his plan for the Messiah to come through them. Paul's illustration of Elijah is his way of reminding the Jews of his own day that Israel's history of apostasy had not moved God away from his original promise and purpose for Israel as originally expressed to Abraham, “through you all of the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). All of this was wrapped up in God's willing gift (grace) to the entire human race.

Israel: A Majority of Unbelievers. Rom. 11:7-10

In verse 7 Paul begins to leave the topic of God's historical purpose for Israel and the subject becomes Israel's future hope, *i.e.* Israel's salvation. The apostle's deep sorrow for his countrymen was stated earlier (9:1-2 and 10:1). What then can be said about the majority of Israelites who, throughout their history, had rejected God's bidding? Our writer continues with the theme of the remnant to show how it illustrates Israel's present situation and its future hope. The Israelites sought a right relationship with God but, as a nation, they did not find it. The reason was that they sought it through their own goodness, their achievements, and their mistaken idea of a preferential position with God. They did not seek righteousness by faith (trust in God's promise) as Abraham had done. However "the elect" obtained it. This refers to the faithful remnant throughout Israel's history. Just as there were only a few in Elijah's day who were faithful to God and the covenant, so in Paul's day only a few Jews (a remnant) had responded to the call of the Messiah.

We must keep in mind that through most of chapters 9-11 Paul was speaking primarily of Israel's "elect" position as it related to God's purpose in fulfilling his promise to Abraham. Now the apostle begins to develop the topic of the salvation of the Jews. He shows that only a "remnant," a small number of the Jews, has responded to the Messiah. The righteousness pursued by Israel came to fruition only for the remnant because they sought it as a matter of grace, accepting it by faith as Abraham had done. In the same way that God had hardened Pharaoh's heart in accomplishing his (God's) purpose for Israel, so now those Jews who are opposing God's purposes in Christ have been hardened also.

In verses 8-10 he illustrates this hardness of heart by referring to three Old Testament passages and ideas. Verse 8 does not give a direct quotation from an Old Testament passage. Instead it is a somewhat rough paraphrase of portions of Deut. 29:4 and Is. 29:10. There is no passage in the Old Testament to exactly match Paul's statement in verse 8.

In verses 9-10 our writer refers to David's petition to God in Ps. 69:22-23. In that psalm David speaks of the table of Israel's enemies becoming a snare. One would think of a dining table as being a place of fellowship and nourishment but David symbolically implores God to make it a snare or that which is a stumbling block and retribution. Paul is not quoting these passages as if they were prophetic proof texts but only in an illustrative way. The context of Ps. 69 shows it to be a lament against the enemies of Israel and a plea for God to blind them that they may be defeated.

The Root and the Branches. God, Israel, and the Gentiles. Rom. 11:11-24

In verse 7 Paul began to introduce Israel's salvation and in verses 11ff he addresses this topic directly. What is in the future for Israel? Paul has spoken of the minority of Israelites (the remnant) but what can be said about the majority of Israel – those who have rejected God's bidding. In verse 11 the apostle asks, "Are they hopelessly lost?" He draws some observations. First, in the form of another rhetorical question, he asks, "Has Israel stumbled beyond any possibility of

recovery?” The Greek phrase **ἵνα πεσῶσι** (*hina pesōsi*) means “in order to fall beyond recovery.” The word **ἵνα**, “in order that,” shows that the phrase has a contemplated result. William Sanday says, “Hence **πεσῶσι** is here used of a complete and irrevocable fall.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 320). Apparently Paul anticipated that the idea of complete abandonment or separation from God had been in the minds of some of his recipients. The word **πεσῶσι** (*pesōsi*) is a much stronger word than the simple word **πτaiω** (*ptaiō*) which means “to stumble” but does not imply a fatal fall. Based on what Paul has already said in chapters 2-10, the obvious answer to his rhetorical question, “Are they hopelessly lost?” is, “No, not at all.”

In verse 12 he says that their stumbling had an important consequence, *i.e.* salvation has been proclaimed among the Gentiles. In Acts 13:46-48 Paul had said that the rejection by the Jews in Antioch would cause him to go to the Gentiles. However there is an additional consequence of this action, *i.e.* it provoked the Jews to jealousy (vs. 11). The verse reads, “But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!” (NIV) In this verse he uses the word **ἡττημα** (*hēttēma*) translated “loss” in the NIV. The word is translated in a variety of ways in different versions: “diminishing” (KJV), “loss” (ASV, NIV), “failure” (NASV, RSV), and “defeat” (NRSV). Many commentators believe that the word “diminishing,” used in the KJV, is the preferred translation. It is relatively strong, carrying the idea of inferiority or complete defeat as in I Cor. 6:7. (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 350.) In the New Testament this word occurs only here and in I Cor. 6:7 where it is translated “defeated.” It is used only once in the LXX, Is. 31:8.

The last phrase in the verse is unusual: “How much greater riches will their fullness bring.” This phrase says that there is an unanticipated consequence in Israel’s rejection of Christ. That rejection caused the gospel to go to the Gentiles but it also illustrated Israel’s important role in God’s overall plan for the salvation of the world. The Greek word **πληρομα** (*plēroma*) is used here. It also has presented difficulties among scholars because the word has multiple meanings. Its basic meaning is “fullness” but it can also mean (1) “that which fills up,” or “the contents of a container,” (2) “a container which is full,” (3) “that which has brought in a full number,” (4) “fulfillment of something” (as a prophecy, promise, or prediction), or (5) “the state of being full.” It is easy to see that although “fullness” is its basic meaning, there are some fine distinctions in the applications of this basic definition. Fitzmyer expresses the majority opinion of scholarship by saying that the most likely accurate idea here is “that which has brought in the full number” of Gentiles. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.* p. 611.) This has led some commentators, such as John Murray, to conclude that the apostle is speaking of the entire Israelite nation coming to Christ in mass conversion at some future date – an eschatological interpretation of the phrase. (Murray, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 78-79.) Murray’s conclusion is to be rejected because the context, in fact Paul’s entire argument up to this point, does not support it and we do not find this specific idea elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul certainly has in mind a contrast between the two ideas of **ἡττημα** (*hēttēma*) “complete defeat” and **πληρομα** (*plēroma*), “the full number.” See comments on verse 25 where the “full number” of the Gentiles is discussed.

It was part of God’s purpose that the Gentile world as well as the Jewish world would accept the salvation provided by Christ. The Jews’ rejection of Christ became a factor in the accomplishment of God’s purpose, *i.e.* to bring the gospel to the non-Jewish world. This is not intended to convey the idea that the only reason the gospel came to the Gentiles was because it was rejected

by the Jews. Instead, God used the disobedience of the Jews as the catalyst to introduce the gospel to the Gentiles with the hope that the jealousy aroused among the Jews might bring them to amore open investigation of the gospel.

In verses 13-16 Paul turns to the Gentiles to illustrate his point but the thrust of his argument remains the same. First he reflects on his personal affection for, and interest in his own people. He does this by speaking of the Gentiles and his apostleship to them. He glorifies his own ministry to the Gentiles by helping to bring them to Christ. We must remember that the Roman church was probably a predominately Gentile church with a Jewish element instead of a Jewish church with a Gentile element. See 11:17. Paul hopes that his own countrymen will come to Christ as a result of all of this, describing the whole scenario as bringing life from the dead. In verse 16 he illustrates this mindset by referring to the Old Testament practice of offering the first fruits as sacrifices. He refers to Num. 15:19-21 concluding that if the initial portion of the dough or harvest is sacred, the remainder is also sacred.

This thought leads to the metaphor of the branches and root (the olive tree) which he will discuss in verses 17-24. The root illustrates the original stock of Israel, the patriarchs which would have been a familiar metaphor. Hosea and Isaiah use similar metaphors of a vine (Hos. 14:6 and Is. 5:7) and in Jn. 15:1ff Jesus uses the vine and branches to illustrate his teaching. Each of these images was familiar to Israel. The illustration is somewhat similar to Jeremiah's use of the metaphor of the potter in Jer. 11:16. Jeremiah's lump of clay, Isaiah's and Hosea's reference to the vine, and Paul's illustration of the olive tree and its branches are all designed to teach the basic lesson that the branches and pottery are God's, but they must yield themselves to God's purposes or do what they were designed to do if they are to please the Maker.

Paul gives us some guidelines in the applications of this metaphor by speaking of the Gentiles being grafted in and the Israelites being cut off. This presents some important factors in our understanding of the church. First, the beginning of the metaphor shows that the church is a continuation of God's plan for the salvation of the world. It is a continuation and fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. Christians and Christianity, to be properly understood, must be seen in this light. The tendency today is to think of the church from only a New Testament viewpoint. However, the New Testament shows a dynamic historical and theological connection to Abraham and the entire Old Testament as it depicts the life of Israel. See Gal. 3:26-28 where baptized believers are referred to as "Abraham's seed."

Second, the olive branches in this allegory represent individuals as Paul describes them. The natural branches represented the direct descendants of Abraham through Isaac. That is, the Israelites. They made up the nation of Israel. However, as counter parts in his allegory, Paul uses these natural branches also to represent the Jews who were the first Christians. In this way Paul shows a continuum between the Old and the New. The unbelief of some of the Jews, their rejection of the Messiah, unfortunately cut them off from the root (their original and natural forefathers, the patriarchs). Remember the words of Christ in Matt. 5:17-18, "I did not come to *destroy* the Law but to *fulfill* it." We are in error when we use this passage to prove that since Christ "fulfilled" the Law he automatically removed it. Although the Old Covenant was removed, that was not his point of Matt. 5:17-18 and the context of that passage does not support that interpretation. Notice the positive connection between the Old Testament nation of Israel

and the New Testament concept of the church. God's church – the *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklēsia*) “the assembly,” “gathering,” or “the congregation” of God's people – goes all the way back beyond Mt. Sinai to God's promise to Abraham that through him “all families of the earth would be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3). The ancient patriarchs then are the symbolic roots of all of God's people both Israelites and Christians (spiritual Israel). This shows the true connection of Old Testament and New Testament. Our identity as God's people today is inseparably tied to Abraham “who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16), and of whom we are heirs (Gal. 3:26-28).

The Jews placed great confidence in being the descendants of Abraham. However, those natural branches (individual Israelites) which were cut off no longer derived their life giving nourishment from the root – their kinship to Abraham – because of their rejection of the one who was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise. The wild olive branches are the Gentiles who were grafted into the root and who therefore benefit from the nourishment of the root (olive tree). Christians are the spiritual descendants of Abraham as Paul states in Rom. 4:16 and Gal. 3:26-28. These wild olive branches and the natural branches must remember that they stand by faith, not through preferential treatment or because of their personal goodness. If their faith fails, they also will be cut off. In addition, the natural branches, which had been cut off because of their unbelief could be grafted back into the root, because God is able to do this.

It is interesting how Paul, all through verses 17-22 reminds both the natural and the wild olive branches that the failure of faith would result in their being cut off. To the Gentile Christians he says, “Don't be arrogant but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.” (11:20-21) Paul has turned the tables on Gentile pride much as he had done earlier with the Jewish pride (chapter 2). Paul's conclusion is that God is both kind and severe. Contemporary mankind sees God's severity as almost nonexistent while some suppose that his love causes him to tolerate almost anything. On the other hand, opponents of Christianity picture God as ruthless and unloving because “he sends people to eternal hell if they don't do what he says.” Paul shows God's demand for fidelity among all mankind.

The whole scenario of the natural and the wild olive branches would have evoked specific images in the minds of both Jews and Gentiles because the wild olive was notoriously unproductive and considered useless. The implication is that the natural branches (Jewish religious culture), was far superior to the wild branches (Gentile religious culture). However, God treated both Jew and Gentile in the same way. Both are to remember that the branch is supported by the root, not the root by the branches.

The Future of Israel. Rom. 11:25-32

This is one of the most complex and confusing blocks of Scripture in the entire book of Romans. Paul says he does not want them to be ignorant of this mystery. The opening phrase, “I would not have you ignorant of this mystery.” The Greek word *μυστήριον* (*mustērion*), translated “mystery,” was most frequently used by the Greeks to describe the pagan mystery cults with their secret messages, rituals, and teachings. These “mysteries” were supposedly known only to the initiate. They were so secretly held that even today very little is known of their practices. Paul's use of the word has caused some to suppose that he is making a comparison between Christianity and those cults but this is not the case. In Christian writings, Paul uses this word

most frequently but not to refer to the mystery religions. See I Cor. 13:2, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26ff. Jesus used the word in Matt. 13:11. The word refers primarily to that which is not known rather than that which is mysterious or filled with superstition. Paul frequently applies it to the purpose of God for the salvation of the world, bringing it to fruition through Christ. Consequently he sees God's eternal purpose as a mystery which has now been revealed through the gospel. In the book of Ephesians he uses it in this way.

When someone believes that he understands something, even though he is misinformed, he may take pride in his supposed superior wisdom. Paul recognizes the danger in this and warns them against being "wise in their own conceits." Matthew Black says that this is "a matchless translation capturing exactly the nuance of Pauline thought and emotion. The expression in Greek (lit. 'clever in oneself') may have been an idiomatic one for 'too clever by far in his own esteem.'" (Matthew Black, *Romans: New Century Bible*, (Greenwood, S.C., the Attic Press, Inc. 1973), p.147.)

Verse 25-26a present a number of difficulties for which we find many theories and much speculation but few truly satisfactory answers. Scholars and commentators are divided concerning the exact meaning and application of the Greek words, making the correct exegesis of the passage more difficult. In addition, the preconceived speculative theories of dispensationalists concerning the mass conversion of the nation of Israel and a supposed millennial reign of Christ on earth have confused the issues even further. The Biblical descriptions of the Parousia and surrounding events preclude the dispensationalists' speculations. For that reason these theories will not be seriously considered.

These difficult issues revolve around the meaning and interpretation of four words or phrases: (1) the hardening, (2) the objects of the hardening (part or all of Israel), (3) the full number of the Gentiles, and (4) the expression, "all Israel shall be saved." Each of the proposed solutions cited below presents problems. The various positions on (1) the hardening is certainly based on Paul's previous discussion of Pharaoh and others in chapter 9, and it does not present serious exegetical difficulties. The objects (2) of the hardening – a portion or Israel or the entire nation – is somewhat inconsequential since either explanation is plausible and does not change the basic meaning of the passage. However, (3) the full number of the Gentiles, is more important but it is difficult to come to a firm conclusion because of the obscurity of the phrase. Finally, (4) "all Israel shall be saved" is certainly more serious than any of the others.

We will take these expressions in the order which they occur in the text and briefly discuss a few of the more popular explanations. Some of the key words in these verses have multiple meanings and applications, adding to the difficulties of proper exegesis.

First, verse 25 says: **οτι πωρωσις απο μερους τω Ισραηλ** (*hoti pōrōsis apo merous tō Israēl*). This is translated in a variety of ways: "that blindness in part has happened to Israel" (KJV), "that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel" (ASV), "that a partial hardening has happened to Israel (NASV), "that a hardening has come upon part of Israel" (RSV, NRSV), and "Israel has experienced a hardening in part" (NIV). The grammar and syntax make it possible for the word **μερους** (*merous*), "part or portion," to mean either a *portion* of Israel has been hardened or that the whole nation of Israel has experienced a *partial* hardening. We will cite the opinions of a

few recognized New Testament scholars.

Barmby, although not a contemporary writer, is representative of a group of commentators who link this passage to 11:8, “a spirit of slumber.” They conclude that in both of these references Paul is speaking of a *partial hardening* which would come to the *entire nation* of Israel. They cite what is considered an error of John Calvin who believed that all of this referred to “spiritual Israel, both Jews and Gentiles” not exclusively to the fleshly nation of Israel. (Barmby, *op. cit.*, pp. 321-323.) Some contemporary commentators believe spiritual Israel is intended by Paul.

Sanday represents a different viewpoint asserting that only a portion of Israel has been hardened, and this is only a temporary condition. (Some Jews had accepted the gospel while the majority had not.) He says, “St. Paul asserts once more what he has constantly insisted on throughout this chapter, that this fall of the Jews is only partial (cf. vv. 5, 7, 17), but here he definitely adds a point to which he has been working up in the previous section, that it is only temporary and that the limitation in time is ‘until all nations of the earth come into the kingdom’; cf. Luke 21:24 and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, pp. 334-335.) In his conclusion Sanday mistakenly applies this passage to the destruction of Jerusalem which is being described in Lk. 21:24. John Murray takes a similar position that only a part of the Israelite nation is hardened but he does not agree with Sanday in linking Lk. 21:24 to this passage. Murray contends that Rom. 11:25 has an eschatological meaning which is not connected to the destruction of Jerusalem even though the words “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” occur in Lk. 21:24 as well as Rom. 11:25. We reject the final conclusions in both of these positions. Sanday’s interpretation that the “time of the Gentiles” in Rom. 11:25 is the same as that expression in Lk. 21:24 is faulty. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem was a localized event but Paul appears to be speaking of a much broader application in Rom. 11:25.

Barrett agrees that the hardening applies to only a portion of Israel. It was through this hardening that the gospel was taken to the Gentiles and that mission will continue until “the full number of the Gentiles” has reached its fruition. (Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 223.) Many commentators relate this to those who are predestined as “the elect.” (See comments below.)

Leander Keck says that since the Jewish rejection of Christ became the occasion for the gospel to go to the Gentiles, Paul warns the Gentile Christians that they should not look down on the Jews because of their rejection of the gospel. Israel’s hardening is not permanent; it is only “until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” He also believes that the context shows that *only a portion* of the nation of Israel is hardened, and that is only a temporary condition.

Joseph Fitzmyer says that Paul does not intend to explain the problem completely or give a satisfactory solution to the Jewish situation in God’s plan. However, Paul connects the hardening of part of Israel to the mystery of which he has just spoken. Consequently Fitzmyer says that Paul is showing that the ultimate solution is part of the revealed mystery of verse 25. On the other hand, Paul seems to recognize that it is somewhat incomprehensible and he does not attempt to explain it. What is important and easily comprehended is that God’s mercy is extended to all human beings, both Jews and Gentiles.

The second issue in verse 24 is the question, “To what does the ‘full number of the Gentiles’ refer?” As already stated, the word **πληρωμα** (*plērōma*) can also have a variety of meanings. It may refer to “the number” of Gentiles or to “the fullness” of the Gentiles. It may also mean “the full complement” of the Gentiles, *i.e.*, “all that is lacking or remaining.” This could refer to all of the Gentiles who have ever been born or those Gentiles who are “predestined” to be saved – a strongly Calvinistic position. This would mean that at the time when “all of the Gentiles” who are to be saved have come to Christ then “all Israel shall be saved.” The context shows that Paul is probably not speaking of a fixed number of Gentiles. James Denney says that the idea of the passage is “when Gentiles in their full strength have come into the church, that the jealousy which this will generate among the Jews will also have come to its fullness and so ‘all Israel [the entire nation, Israel as a whole] will be saved.’ Israel a Christian nation, Israel as a nation, a part of the Messianic kingdom, is the content of his thought.” (Denney, James. *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*. Vol. II, W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 1967, p. 683.) He believes that Paul is looking at Israel from a historical vantage point.

In addition, we have to consider what Paul is referring to when he says “have come in?” Come into what? The term **εἰσελθῆ** (*eiselthē*) means “to come into or enter” and it is used in reference to entering the kingdom (Matt. 7:21, Mk. 9:43-47), entering into life (Matt. 18:8), and other entities. Some commentators believe that this refers to Gentiles coming into the millennial kingdom, others say it refers to the church, and others believe it is eternal salvation. A few commentators believe that Israel will come into the kingdom as a nation, rebuild the temple on its original site, and reestablish various practices of the Law of Moses. This is a small minority viewpoint, but since the Dome of the Rock now stands on the location of the ancient temple, the Moslems see this as a threat to their own religion.

We reject the idea that the entire nation of Israel, at sometime in the future, will come to Christ in mass conversion because it finds no support elsewhere in Scripture. Old Testament passages speaking of the return of Israel to the Promised Land are speaking of the restoration from the Exile rather than an eschatological event. See I Thess. 4:13-18 and I Cor. 15 where Paul presents important information concerning the Parousia. These passages make it definite that there will be no millennial reign of Christ on earth or a massive conversion of Israel accompanied by a strong Jewish repopulation of the Promised Land. In 1948 when the country of Israel was established by the United Nations a strong but unfounded anticipation of Christ’s second coming was publicized by various dispensationalist groups. They believe that this movement was a sign that the Parousia was near. Obviously none of this came to pass. It appears that the passage is speaking only of a time when many Jews would come to Christ. However, this does not solve the problem. Concerning the proposed solutions just cited, perhaps Fitzmyer’s idea is best. He says that Paul did not give us a solution to the problem but he only shows us that God’s mercy as well as his justice will always be at work in his dealings with the human race.

Relatively little is said by the commentators concerning the expression **καὶ οὕτως** (*kai houtos*) which is usually translated “and so” in verse 26. This word carries the literal idea of “in the manner spoken of,” “in the way it was done,” “in this way,” or “in such a manner.” It can also mean “under these circumstances,” “even so,” “this having been done,” and “so then.” (Joseph H. Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 468, Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 602.) The translation, “in the manner

spoken of” or “in this way” appears to be closer to Paul’s thought than the other ideas discussed above. In chapters 1-7 Paul has been teaching that salvation is open to all human beings on the same grounds or conditions. There is no preferential treatment for Israel. The Jews had misunderstood God’s purpose in the whole scheme of things and their own function in the fulfillment of that purpose. In Rom. 9:1 – 11:6 Paul has been trying to correct Israel’s misunderstanding of these things. In those chapters he did not address the salvation of ethnic Israel until 11:7 but he emphasized Israel’s function as the nation through which the Messiah would come and spoke constantly of God’s choices involved in this. He spoke about God’s constant love for his people and that he had not cast them away or abandoned them. God is showing mercy to Israel in exactly the same way as he is showing mercy to all mankind. Every Israelite (“all Israel”) has access to God’s grace in the same way as every Gentile has such access. This is compatible with Paul’s previous teaching (chapters 1-7) and fits into the context of 9:1—11:24.

In verses 26b-27 Paul calls on some Old Testament statements to illustrate his point. These are not a direct quotations but a conflation and paraphrasing of statements from Is. 59:20-21, Ps. 14:7, Ps. 53:6, and Jer. 31:31-34. Other Old Testament passages also have the same message. In these passages Paul shows that God is not through with Israel, but the nation must turn to the Messiah in order to fulfill its own hopes. Later Paul speaks of “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20) as he engaged representatives of the Jews when he was a prisoner in Rome. His message is that Israel is precious to the Lord, God has not cast off his people, and they have an important place in his plan. However, that is not a position of preferential treatment but of equal treatment.

In Paul’s paraphrase of the Old Testament passages mentioned above he spoke of a deliverer coming “out of Zion” and a new covenant which God would make with Israel. (Some translations of the Old Testament passages read “out of Zion” and others read “to Zion.” Although there is a difference in those readings, the sense of the passage is not changed.) Isaiah 59:20-21 says, “‘The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,’ declares the Lord. ‘As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the Lord. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,’ says the Lord.” Also, Paul may be referring to Ps. 14:7 or Ps. 53:6 each of which express the hope of a deliverer coming out of Zion. The thought of the new covenant is most extensively stated by Jeremiah in Jer. 31:31-34 and quoted in Heb. 8:8-12. The writer of Hebrews applies Jeremiah’s statement to the New Covenant in Christ, the gospel. Most of those who believe that this passage is referring to the restoration of national Israel apply Rom. 11:26b-27 to the time of the return of Christ, the Parousia. According to that interpretation the new covenant being spoken of by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the writer of Hebrews is not the gospel but an eschatological covenant with national Israel to be instituted at the time of the Parousia and the earthly millennial reign of Christ. There are many and widely different forms of this belief. This position comes from a misunderstanding of the Old Testament references cited by Paul and particularly Paul’s thesis in chapters 9 through 11. The key to the Old Testament quotations (Isaiah and Jeremiah), the application in Heb. 8:8-12, and Paul’s statements in Rom. 9-11 is that God promises to remove (take away) sins and remember them no more. He applies this to both Israel and the Gentiles. This fits very well into Paul’s argument throughout the book.

Paul concludes the polemic section of the book in verses 28-32. Depending on the vantage point

from which they are viewed, the Jews are called enemies but from another perspective they are also loved as one looks back into the history of their forefathers. They opposed God, Christ, and the church, and from that point of view they were enemies of the gospel. Yet, the Jews' rejection of the gospel was the occasion for bringing Christianity to the Gentiles. God had nourished Israel from time of Mt. Sinai until the sacrifice of Christ, all of which was necessary in bringing the gospel to the world. God's love for Israel has never been weakened and part of Paul's argument is that this history cannot be set aside or forgotten. These are statements of the facts which Paul has already presented. God's gifts (his promises, his actions, his love for his creation, etc.) are irrevocable. Verses 30-32 are reassurance of this.

The Doxology. Rom. 11:33-36

This doxology is a fitting conclusion to the first eleven chapters of this book – the polemic section. Paul is overwhelmed when he comes face to face with the magnificence of God's purpose, love, and willingness to sacrifice Christ for the redemption of sinful mankind. In this he expresses the depth of his own personal thanksgiving for the unfathomable love of God. The wisdom and knowledge of the Almighty, his judgments, and his movements among mankind are beyond human imagination. Verse 34 is reminiscent of some of Paul's observations of the foolishness among the Greek philosophers of Corinth as they attempt to explain all things apart from God but fail to understand how God's wisdom far surpasses all of man's achievements. See I Cor. 1-4. Having attempted to correct the misunderstandings of his addressees he presents his climax to all of this yet he sees his inadequacy in such a statement. Therefore he asks, "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him?" All of this sees its climax in Paul's final statement: "For from him, and through him, and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen."

Chapter XIII

The Lifestyle of the Justified

Rom. 12:1-21

Introduction to 12:1—15:13

Sometimes the division of chapters and sections in the New Testament obscure the importance of context. Although Paul completed his polemic in 11:32, the demands of godliness based on one's justification by God's grace have a dynamic connection to the previous sections. The Christian life is not detached from one's continued sense of the magnitude of God's love and Christ's sacrifice. Chapters 12-15 underline the obligations and responsibilities of the Christian life, giving us important information on a variety of topics – the sacrificial life, the use of one's gifts in the service of God, our relationship to civil authorities, our responsibilities to the weaker brother, etc. The theological issues are not divorced from the practical issues. Instead, the theological becomes the foundation of the practical

The ethical admonitions of chapters 12-15 are based on the fact and expressions of God's unfathomable love for his sinful children. Our obedience to God is our only way of expressing the profound gratitude which must dominate our lives. God's love, expressed in the atonement, is to be met by our absolute dedication to Christ as expressed in the Christian life. Chapters 1-11 describe God's design of grace and mankind's response of faith. Chapters 12-15 describe the lifestyle of those who have accepted the justification offered in the cross and the resurrection. As one of our hymns says, "He paid a debt he did not owe; I owed a debt I could not pay." The Christian life is our only way of expressing gratitude for Christ's sacrifice.

Chapter 12 describes some of the particulars of the sacrificial life. Animal sacrifice, with their obvious inadequacy came to a halt with the sacrifice of Christ. Our lives are to be living sacrifices holy and acceptable to God. The transformation of our lives and thinking is to be characterized by our willing service, using our God-given gifts to glorify him. Love is to be sincere as demonstrated in our treatment of our enemies as well as our attitudes toward our fellow Christians. Life, even under a repressive governmental system, is to be exemplified by respect and obedience. Ultimately, love is the answer to life's complex situations. Weaker brothers are to be treated with compassion and love, and their spiritual welfare is not to be set aside by our own boasting of superior strength. Chapters 12-15 are a treasure-trove of Christian living defining the relationship between God's gifts and man's responsibilities.

The Sacrificial Life. Rom. 12:1-8

Paul links the Christian life to God's mercy. C.H. Dodd says, "Christian morality is the response to all the mercy of God, which has been movingly set forth in the preceding chapters. It does not begin with a man's ambition to make himself a fine specimen of virtuous humanity, and so, it may be, to win the approval of God. It begins with the thankful recognition that God, the source of all goodness, has done for him what he could never do for himself." (C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, (London: Collins Press, 1959), p. 198.) In this way Paul emphasizes the motivation for the Christian life.

Commentary

In the brief introductory statement of verse 1 Paul gives two important exhortations. First, he says that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. Second, we are not to be conformed to this world but are to be transformed through the renewal of our minds. The fact that Paul begins this section by saying “Therefore” should alert us to the author’s intended connection with his past arguments. He uses the Greek phrase **παρακαλω ουν** (*parakalō oun*) which is translated “Therefore I appeal” or “Therefore I beseech you.” The expression is very broad and may also be translated, “I encourage you,” “I urge you,” or “I summon you.” It is used frequently by the apostle (I Cor. 4:16, Eph. 4:1, I Tim. 2:1, and elsewhere) but it is not just a mild request. Instead, it is a strong urging for his readers to take the demands of a sacrificial lifestyle very seriously. Although the phrase was also used in diplomatic and governmental situations, Paul uses it to say, “Based on what I have already told you, I strongly urge you to _____.”

He bases this on “the mercies of God,” using the word **οικτιρμος** (*oiktirmos*), “mercy or compassion.” This word occurs only five times in the New Testament, always by Paul, four of which are plural. The word **ελεος** (*eleos*) is the more commonly used word for mercy or compassion and it is found about twenty-eight times in the New Testament. Paul used it most frequently in his writings, even in Romans. The two words are almost identical in their meaning and we cannot offer a reason why Paul employed a different word here than is ordinarily used. The word **οικτιρμος** (*oiktirmos*) is used frequently in the LXX almost always in the plural.

In order to fulfill Paul’s urging each of us must present his own body as a living sacrifice to God. The word **παραστησαι** (*parastēsai*) is translated “present.” Among the Jews of Paul’s day this word was generally used in a technical way referring the presentation of the sacrifice to God. However, among the Greeks and generally in the New Testament, it had a much broader meaning. Luke uses it when speaking of Jesus being presented in the temple, Lk. 2:22 and Paul uses it to speak of Christ presenting the church to the Father, Eph. 5:27. There may be an underlying and indirect parallel in Paul’s mind. Earlier he has stressed the love of the Father and the Son shown in the atonement – the offering of Christ’s body as a sacrifice – and now he calls on Christians to offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God.

Leander Keck says, “Three words characterize the sacrifice: living, holy, and acceptable. A ‘living’ sacrifice is ongoing, steadily manifest in daily life. . . A sacrifice is ‘holy’ because it is dedicated to God and blemish-free. . . A sacrifice that is ‘acceptable’ does not simply meet minimum requirements (getting a C-) but is literally ‘well pleasing’ (**ευαρεστον** - *eureston*) to God; it is worthy of divine approbation.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-292.)

Verse 1 is filled with meaning, but it is frequently misused. Sometimes when translating from one language to another we come across an expression which has no exact equivalent in another language. We see this in Jesus’ statements in the beatitudes with the word **μακαριος** (*makarios*) translated “blessed” and in Paul’s expression **μη γενοιτο** (*mē genoito*) frequently translated “God forbid.” In Rom. 12:1 we have a similar situation with the two words **λογικην** (*logikēn*), translated “reasonable or spiritual” and **λατρειον** (*latreion*) which is variously translated as

“service,” “service of worship,” or “act of worship.” The true impact of these words is difficult to translate into another language.

The basic meaning of the word **λογικην** (*logikēn*) is to identify humans as “rational being.” It is a compound word with the prefix (**λογ**) coming from the word **λογος** (*logos*) which describes that which is rational or that which comes from “words.” Paul contrasts this with the irrational dead animals sacrificed under Judaism. The Greek Stoic philosopher, Epictetus (A.D. 55-135) used the word in this way when he said “If I were a nightingale, I should be singing as a nightingale; if a swan, as a swan. But I am a rational being (**λογικος ειμι**), therefore I must be singing hymns of praise to God.” (Quoted by James C. Dunn, *op. cit.* vol. 38B, on CD.) Linguists generally believe that the translation “reasonable or rational” is the best translation for the word in 12:1.

The other important word in this phrase is **λατρειον** (*latreion*). It is variously translated as “service,” “service of worship,” or “act of worship.” The emphasis of the word is “service” rather than “worship.” It was sometimes used by the Greeks to describe their pagan ceremonial service. The word appears only five times in the New Testament although the verb form is used about twenty-one times. It is usually translated “service.” In the LXX it was used about eight times to describe a religious service in the sacrifice of animals. However the word generally used in the New Testament to describe God’s people worshipping is **προσκυνεω** (*proskuneō*). It is very symbolic, primarily referring to the praise and adoration of God. It appears about sixty times in the New Testament and is almost always translated “worship.” See Matt. 2:2, 8, 11 and Jn. 4:20-24 as examples. The word originally meant to prostrate oneself before another person (or an image) and kiss the feet in total submission. It came to mean “to kiss toward” and finally “to worship.” The importance of this is that the word came to identify the profound and sacred participation of an individual in his praise and adoration of God. It is not formal but it is personal. To translate **λατρειον** (*latreion*) as “act of worship” does not communicate the basic message of “service” or the New Testament description of Christian worship. The word “service” rather than “act of worship” appears to be a more nearly accurate translation in this context. The sense of the whole passage from a contextual as well as from a linguistic perspective is: “The Israelites had their ceremonial rites in the sacrifice of irrational dead animals and special yearly celebrations. The pagans had their ceremonial rites of various kinds. However, as followers of Christ, your ceremonial rite is wrapped up in the living sacrifice of your whole being to the God who made you. Your duty of serving is not simply a ceremony. It is the living sacrifice.”

In verse 2 Paul explains the basic meaning of what he has said. “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your minds.” The Greek word **συσχηματιζεσθε** (*suschēmatizesthe*) is a compound word which has given rise to a great deal of discussion among linguists. The prefix **συν** (*sun*) means “together with” or “in the same manner.” This is combined with the word **σχηματι** (*schēmati*) meaning “in fashion” or “form.” Paul used this word in Phil. 2:7 to describe Christ’s incarnation – “he was found in *fashion* [form] as a man.” Sanday says that the expression, “do not be conformed [**συσχηματιζεσθε**] to this world” means, “Do not adopt the external and fleeting fashion of this world.” When Paul identifies “this world” he uses the word **αιωνι** (*aiōni*) meaning “this age” rather than **κοσμος** (*kosmos*) which means the material universe or world. By using **αιωνι** (*aiōni*), meaning “this age,” he may be making an indirect application to the Jewish eschatological contrast between “this present age in which we

live” and the “Messianic Age.” The Jews viewed “this age” as evil and the “Messianic Age” as ideal.

In contrast to this the apostle says we are to be **μεταμορφουσθε** (*metamorphousthe*). This is the word from which we get the English term “metamorphosis” which means a change in the physical form or character. It is frequently applied to the stages of development of an insect from the egg stage to the adult insect. The Greek word carries that idea. Paul says that there must be a transformation of one’s character and that comes about by the renewal of the mind. The spirit of the person, not simply his overt behavior, takes a new form. It has been changed by the mercies of God. One’s thinking must be changed.

The goal of this is to “prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The key word in this is **δοκιμαζειν** (*dokimazein*) which means to prove or demonstrate the value of something by testing it. This demonstrating of God’s will shows that it passes the test of practical living.

In some ways, the remainder of the chapter is Paul’s commentary and applications of verses 1-2. In verse 3 he says that he is speaking to them according to the gifts which God has bestowed on him. No doubt Paul is referring to his apostolic appointment as he does elsewhere in his writings. He addresses “everyone among you.” Some commentators believe that Paul is indirectly addressing the Gentiles Christians who believed that they were superior to the Jewish Christians but he says he is addressing “everyone among you.” The problem of conceit is evident in all cultures. In Christianity there is no room for this and Paul addresses those who think too highly of themselves. In what way this was manifesting itself is not told. In Corinth the competition over spiritual gifts – “my gift is more important than your gift” – presented major problems for the congregation and there may have been some such problem at Rome.

The only solution for this is for a person to consider three things. First, he is not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Second, he should think of himself soberly. Third, this should be regulated in reference to God’s gift of faith. In this verse Paul uses an interesting play on words. He uses the basic Greek word **φρονεω** (*phroneō*), meaning “to think.” First he adds the prefix **υπερ** (*hyper*) to the word making it mean “to think highly.” His point is for a person not to think more highly of himself than is appropriate. As the apostle continues, he adds the prefix **συ** (*su*) to the base word, changing its meaning “to think sober-mindedly.” That is, he is to think of himself in a calm and sound manner. The word comes from a mental health viewpoint implying a balanced, realistic, and modest view of oneself. It is not simply the opposite of conceit but it goes to the state of one’s mental capacity. (See Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 809.) Unfortunately some believe they have abilities beyond the gifts which God has given. It is important to notice that Paul says that one’s gifts are given according to the measure of faith which comes from God. The capacity to exercise faith varies from one person to another. Paul says that in God’s mercy each of us has been given “a measure of faith” and we are to serve him within these bounds. We must remember that faith itself is the gift of God, not an accomplishment of an individual.

In verse 4 he begins to define what he means by the statements of verse 3. He begins by saying, “Just as,” showing the link between his previous statement and the following statement. We may

paraphrase this: “Exercise your individual gift according to the faith which God has given you. Work together in the same way that various parts of the body work together, each performing its own function according to the needs of the body as a whole.” We should not view this passage as if Paul was saying that some people have “saving faith” while others do not. He is speaking of the exercise of God’s gifts in one’s personal life and in the corporate life of the church.

The reason for all of this is that the church is a body. Just as the human body has many parts, each with its own function, so also the church is made up of people with many talents (gifts) from God. Regardless of how talented a person may be, he must remember that he is just one part of the body, and he functions only for the health and wellbeing of the body, not as a means of calling attention to himself. See I Cor. 12:12-30 where Paul gives extensive information on the need which each member of the body has for every other member. This harmony is the only condition under which the body can function efficiently.

In verse 5 he says that each member belongs to every other member. The basic truth is that we have different gifts which God has given to each one. These are given in accordance to one’s faith as in verse 3. It is difficult for us to think in terms of “apportioned faith” yet the Bible speaks of grace in the same way, Eph. 4:7. In I Cor. 13:2 Paul speaks of “faith that can move mountains.” Paul’s emphasis is that all of our talents come from God as shown in I Cor. 4:7, “what do you have that you have not received,” and our various talents (gifts) are strengthened as our faith grows. Not only do our gifts differ from one person to another but our capacity to use those gifts also differs from one to another. Paul’s message is that God apportions the gift as well as our capacity to fulfill the gift.

Beginning in verse 6 our author lists seven gifts which Christians may possess. Because prophesying is one of these gifts, some have thought of the group as the miraculous gifts of the Spirit similar to some of those spoken of in I Cor. 12 – 14. The Greek word **χαρίσματα** (*charismata*) may apply to miraculous or non-miraculous gifts. It is usually translated “gift, benefit, favor, or endowment” and it almost always refers to a gift bestowed by God whether miraculous or non-miraculous. See Rom. 11:29, I Cor. 7:7, II Cor. 1:11. Each gift, including its function, shows it has its origin in God. All of them are simply God’s gifts (talents) which are given to people and which can be used for the good of the body of Christ. Basically Paul says that each person should use his God-given talents for the glory of God and the strengthening of the church.

A prophet, **προφήτης** (*prophētēs*) was not necessarily one who was given the power to predict the future or to reveal God’s will directly through the Holy Spirit. Instead, the word means one who speaks out, one who speaks for another, or one who makes a proclamation. It was used among Christians and pagans alike. It is frequently used to refer to one who reveals religious truth but is not limited to this. In Old Testament times there were schools for prophets and those who studied in these schools were called sons of the prophets (I Kgs. 20:35, II Kgs. 2:3-7, II Kgs. 4:1, 38, Amos 7:14, and others.) So the word is used broadly in both Old Testament and New Testament. Paul says that a person who “speaks forth” should do so out of the strength of his faith.

Those who serve, teach, encourage, contribute to the needs of others, those who lead, or show mercy should all use these God-given gifts to the very best of their ability. In this group Paul

uses the word **διακονιαν** (*diakonian*) referring to one who serves. Unfortunately this word has been misunderstood and misused. It is the word from which we get “deacon” which has come to mean a position or an officer in the church but the word itself does not imply this. The word is broad and is used in a wide variety of circumstances. Its basic meaning is not to identify a position but a work. Jesus referred to himself as a **διακονιαν**, that is, a servant (minister) but it had nothing to do with position but it had all to do with his role as a servant. In Rom. 16:1 Paul refers to Phoebe as a **διακονον** of the church in Cenchrea. This was not referring to an office or position which she held in the church but rather the fact that served the congregation in that city. (See comments on 16:1 where the variety of uses is discussed in more detail.)

Some Basic Principles of the Christian Life. Rom. 12:9-21

When the unity of the body is established and Christians are willing to exercise their abilities for building the strength of the church, Paul gives some practical observations about things which should be included in the life of the church. Verses 9-13 need little comment but a great deal of application. Love is to be sincere, evil is to be shunned, and good must be held. Devotion and brotherly love are essential, honor others rather than yourself, and be zealous in spiritual fervor. Serve the Lord, be joyful in your hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. Always share with those in need and be willing to show hospitality to others. In verses 14-21 the apostle deals with the difficult topic of our treatment of those who cross us or are our enemies. Let’s look at the particulars of some of the principles enjoined in verses 9-21.

Commentary

In verse 9 he uses the word **αγαπη** (*agapē*). The Greek language of Paul’s day had at least four words to distinguish kinds of love. The word **φιλεω** (*phileō*) was used to refer to family love or brotherly love and it has an element of emotion or feeling involved in it. See verse 10. It is not used frequently, appearing only about ten times in the New Testament. It is also used in the Old Testament (LXX). The word **ερος** (*eros*) referred to passionate love which was generally sexually oriented. This word does not appear in either the Old Testament (LXX) or the New Testament. The word **στοργη** (*storgē*) was also used in some secular writings but does not appear in either the Old Testament or the New Testament.

The word **αγαπη** (*agapē*) is used most frequently in both the Old Testament (LXX) and the New Testament. This word and its cognates appear more than one hundred seventy times in the New Testament alone. It is a very broad word, the basic meaning of which is the will “to do, to see, or to desire” the best for someone else rather than the description of romantic or emotional love. However, the word does not necessarily eliminate or void those aspects of love. It is sometimes used in this way in both Old Testament (LXX) and New Testament to describe husband and wife relationships, love of parents for children, etc. This word is also used by Christ when he tells us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44-45).

In verse 9 Paul says that love should be “sincere.” The Greek word used here is **ανυποκριτος** (*anupokritos*). This is a compound word literally meaning “without hypocrisy” and it is sometimes translated that way. It is interesting that the word was not used by secular writers of Rome.

Scholars tell us that it occurs only once in such writings – by Marcus Aurelius who lived A.D. 112-180. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 360.) Originally the basic word, **υποκριτης** (*hupokritēs*) meant a stage actor who replied to a Greek chorus, or a pretender. As such, it was a perfectly good word. However it came to mean a person who pretended in life to be something which he was not.

Next, Paul uses a contrast concerning good and evil, saying that one should abhor evil and cling to good. He uses two important words. The word **αποστουγουντες** (*apostugountes*) is very strong and is translated “to abhor.” It is a compound word made up of **απο** (*apo*) meaning “away or away from” and **στουγεω** (*stugeō*), meaning “to hate. The other important word is **κολλωμενοι** (*kollōmenoi*) which means “to hold very tightly to something, to cling to, or to join closely.” Paul says, “hold tightly, be joined closely” to that which is good. Sanday describes the contrast in this phrase in this way: “The word expresses a strong feeling of horror; the **απο** [*apo*] - by further emphasizing the idea of separation gives an intensive force, which is heightened by contrast with **κολλωμενοι** [*kollōmenoi*]. (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 360.) Basically Paul says, “avoid all evil with a ‘strong feeling of horror’ but be ‘closely joined and tightly hold’ to that which is good.”

In verse 10 he says to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” The word for “brotherly love” is **φιλαδελφια** (*philadelphia*) which is a compounding of **φιλεω** (*phileō*), meaning “love” and **αδελφος** (*adelphos*) meaning “brother.” See above comments on the word “love.” This expression goes from the broad general statement of the importance of the sincerity of love (verse 9) to the specifics of personal affection within the family of God. In this regard, Paul says that each person should honor the other individual rather than taking such honor to oneself. His message is that in true love and affection for one’s fellows, an individual seeks to bestow honor on the other person rather than to take it for himself. Also see Phil. 2:3 where the apostle says, “each counting the other better than himself.” Although the thoughts are not identical, they hold a close kinship.

The admonitions of verse 11 are closely related to each other by contrast. Christians are to be “never lacking in zeal” but always “holding on to your spiritual fervor.” The question arise whether Paul is speaking of the fervor of spirit as the presence and prompting of the Holy Spirit or is he speaking of the human spirit serving God with fervor. Scholars are divided on this. Fitzmyer says that many contemporary scholars believe Paul is speaking of the Holy Spirit while others believe he is speaking of the human spirit. The Greek grammar and syntax give us no help on this.

In verse 14 Paul says, “Bless those who persecute you.” This admonition and that in 12:17-21 reflect the saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount when he addressed one’s love for enemies. The natural inclination would have been to curse one’s enemies but Paul admonishes the opposite. It is easy to congratulate and thank those who show hospitality (vs. 13) but it is not so easy to bless those who persecute you. One of the hallmarks of the early Christians was their perseverance under persecution and their attitudes toward their persecutors. Notice that Paul did not address the Christian life in the negative by saying, “Do not retaliate against your persecutors.” This is a neutral position of inaction. Instead, he told his addressees, “You are to take positive action and bless those who persecute you.” Christianity does not live in the vacuum of

not doing evil things. Such inaction is not the definition of being “good.” It is the definition of being “neutral.” Rather, Christianity lives through the vibrant action-filled life of doing positive good even to those who want to harm us. This is the definition of “good.”

Next, verse 15 tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. The joy of others should create joy in us and the sorrow of others should create sorrow in us. We sometimes find it more difficult to share their joys than to share their sorrows. The success of others and the consequent joy which they experience sometimes stirs our own jealousy and it becomes a threat to us because we silently ask, “Why was I not as fortunate as the other person?” Historically the idea of blessing another person who experienced such joy was a characteristic of the Hebrews but not of the Greeks. The Greeks would praise and congratulate but the Hebrews tended to tie such benefits to a higher source and a blessing of grace and peace would be frequently invoked on behalf of the other person.

In verse 16 Paul speaks of the harmony which should exist between Christians. Translated literally the Greek phrase used here says, “to think the same thing among yourselves.” The use of *φρονεω* (*phroneō*) is especially important because it means “to think, to be of the opinion, or to be considerate.” This is the word Paul used in Phil. 2:5 when he exhorted the Philippians to “Have this *mind* in you” literally, “think this in you.” Harmony is not simply saying the same things but it involves learning to think in the same way.

Three other injunctions follow in this verse. We are told not to be proud, to associate with others who may be considered lowly, and not to be conceited. Each of these deals with the core of human relationships. The injunction against pride deals with arrogance or haughtiness. This is reminiscent of the teaching of Jesus concerning pride and humility. “The first shall be last and the last shall be first,” “The greatest among you is the servant of all.” See also I Tim. 6:17 where Paul warns that wealth may lead to arrogance, and Jms. 4:6 that “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Paul’s second injunction in this verse speaks of association with the lowly. Jesus was severely criticized because he associated with “publicans and sinners.” To this he replied that “the whole have no need for the physician but those who are sick.” Jesus’ association with the outcast of his society became an example to others. The Greeks valued the idea of human freedom and to them the word translated “lowly” meant “the trivial, menial, and petty.” This violates the basic worth of every human being. The value of a human being was Jesus’ idea in Matt. 5:21-22.

Paul’s third injunction in verse 16 is against conceit. It is interesting that in verse 3 he said “to every man among you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think.” Paul chose his words carefully. Self-esteem is not wrong, but when one allows his self-esteem to become pride and conceit he has violated God’s principle of humility. Christians are not told to have a low estimate of themselves but to have a balanced view. This includes self-esteem (a healthy recognition of one’s worth in God’s sight) and humility (recognizing and accepting one’s abilities tempered by the recognition and acceptance of one’s limitations and faults).

Verses 17-21 deal with one’s treatment of his enemies, particularly from the point of view of personal revenge. Notice that Paul is not addressing self-defense but revenge. The opening

principle is this: do not practice returning evil for evil. This was completely contrary to the practices of almost all ancient pagan cultures, so this was a revolutionary principle in Christianity. Jesus emphasized the importance of returning good for evil in Matt. 5:38-48 and Lk. 6:27-36. The counterpart of this is in the next statement: “take thought for what is noble in the sight of all men.” The NIV translates this, “Be careful to do what is *right* in the sight of all men.” Ordinarily the word “right,” when referring to an ethical-moral topic, is translated from the word **δικαιος** (*dikaïos*) which is basically a legal term referring to that which justice demands. The word Paul uses is **καλα** (*kala*), the basic thrust of which is its noble or beautiful character. In addition, this is not the same word which is commonly translated “good” (**αγαθος** –*agathos*). That word usually addresses good from the point of view of utility, workability, or usefulness but **καλα** (*kala*), the word Paul uses in verse 17, addresses the topic not from a utilitarian or legal viewpoint but in regard to its noble quality, and its highest level of character. (Trench, *op. cit.*, p. 389.) But what are “noble things” in the sight of “all men?” All of humanity recognizes noble acts or mercy, service and character. By practicing these Paul says you display the essence of Christian character not just behavior.

Verse 18 recognizes certain limitations in one’s relationships with others. “If it is possible,” and “as far as it depends on you,” “live peaceably with everybody.” Paul recognized the difficulties which Christians had in the hostile pagan Roman Empire. We do not have the power to create the kind of environment which would promote or allow this but he says, “Be sure you do the very best you can.” The evil around us does not give us excuse to become like others. Instead, we must strive to be what God intends us to be. We cannot control what others may do in breaking the peace.

A major key in this is found in verse 19. Do not take revenge. That is God’s work, and he has promised that he will exercise that prerogative. It may not be in a way or at a time we desire, but God says that is his option (Deut. 32:35). In addition, feed your enemy if he is hungry and give him something to drink if he is thirsty. This is from Prov. 25:21-22. The motivation of this behavior is not in order to “heap coals of fire upon his head” but an act of kindness which displays authentic Christian character. Evil can overcome us rather easily. Paul says this can be countered by doing good to those would do evil to you.

Chapter XIV
Christians and Civil Government
Love and Vigilant Conduct
Rom. 13:1-14

The Christian and Civil Government: Rom. 13:1-7

This passage is the longest in the Bible concerning the Christian's relationship to civil government. Three other passages in the epistles exhort Christians to respect, and obey civil authorities. Governmental officials are also to be the objects of Christians' prayers. See I Tim. 2:1-2, Tit. 3:1, and I Pet. 2:13-17.

Not only has Rom. 13:1-7 been theologically misunderstood, it has also been misapplied in bizarre ways. History shows that governments and individual Christians have used this passage to defend atrocities committed in the name of civil government, political policies regarding governmental authority, and military invasions and conquests. It was used during World War II to support Hitler's treatment of Jews, and later to condemn those who opposed the Viet Nam War. The abuses and misapplications are almost endless.

Proper exegesis and understanding of the passage must include a brief summary of some important facts in Roman history at the time Paul wrote. The role of Rome in the lives of both Christians and Jews cannot be overlooked. Along with this is the Jewish and Christian attitude toward Rome. This includes the all important question of paying taxes to a foreign government. These questions were not confined to any one particular segment of the Empire such as Palestine or the city of Rome.

Three important areas need to be noted as we begin. First, we must look at the contextual relationship of the passage. Second, we must notice the historical background especially as it reflects the Roman attitude toward the Jews and by implication toward the Christians and also the reverse of this. Third, we must look at the Jewish view of their own theocracy and their Messianic hope.

Contextual Considerations

Many scholars have discussed the question of the contextual relationship of this passage to previous topics. Some believe that the passage has no uniquely Pauline characteristics either in theology or style. For this reason they dismiss it, saying it is an interpolation written by a different author and incorporated later into the manuscripts. However, there is no indication of any such textual variation in any manuscript of Romans. In addition, there is nothing in the passage which cannot be harmonized with Paul's writings. In the second century Irenaeus (A.D. 130-202) quotes from the passage indicating its existence and acceptance. This position, that the passage is a later interpolation, has been abandoned by most scholars because of the lack of evidence.

Others believe that this is a "stand-alone" passage which Paul incorporated into his letter, probably because he was aware of some religious-political problems in the Roman church and was

giving instructions to clarify and correct these difficulties. This position holds that there is no contextual connection to be found. By the time Paul wrote Romans (A.D. 57-58) he may have become aware of some difficulties in Rome and just inserted the information needed to help his addressees. John Murray is among the commentators who hold this position. (Murray, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 146.)

On the other hand, there appears to be a dynamic link between this passage and previous teaching in the letter. Even though some scholars consider the passage to be an interruption of Paul's discussion of love in 12:17-21 (which is continued in 13:8), there can also be seen a specific link to that discussion. In 12:17-21 the apostle has been speaking of returning good for evil on a very personal basis. In 13:1-7 he is continuing his general topic of treatment of those who were abusing the Christian community but he relates this not to personal enemies but to governmental entities. It is important to remember that there had been no Empire directed persecutions until the second century, yet various local governmental agencies had opposed Christianity and there were localized persecutions as we see in Acts. In 13:1-7 Paul goes from the personal (12:17-21) to the civil authorities (13:1-7). In 12:18 he had said, "If it be possible, be at peace with everyone." In 13:1-7 he shows that this extends to governmental officials, payment of taxes and revenues, and honoring those who deserve to be honored.

We go back to 12:17-20. Should an offender be completely free – not punished for his abuses? Although Paul does not offer a complete resolution of this problem, he insists that civil authorities are in place to do good to those who do the right thing but also to punish those who are evil. In fact, they are God's servants, agents of wrath, to punish the wrong-doer (13:7). Contextually, this fits well into the flow of Paul's admonitions.

Historical Background

We do not have any particulars of the immediate situation in Rome, and we also notice that Paul's statements in 13:1-7 are quite general in nature. He does not address a specific problem but lays down a few broad principles. About A.D. 49 the emperor Claudius (A.D. 49-54) expelled the Jews from Rome (probably including the Christian Jews) but the reason behind this expulsion is not clear. In some parts of the Empire, especially in Palestine, there were small rebellions of the Jews against Rome, but none of these ever accomplished anything. In Act 5:34-39 Gamaliel referred to two of these rebellions which are also mentioned by Josephus. We must remember that in its early years Christianity was thought of as a sect of Judaism much like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. This is brought to light in the statement from the Jewish leaders who visited Paul in Rome in Acts 28:22.

The historical background must also include Rome's taxation policies which had been a source of much opposition and restlessness among the Jews. The Gospel accounts of the Jewish disdain for the publicans always come to mind when we think of Roman taxation. Jesus was confronted with the problem of paying taxes to Caesar in Matt. 22:15-22. It was a great irritation to the Jews in the first century.

The taxation policies of Rome had not always been as severe as they were in the days of Jesus and Paul. Julius Caesar, who ruled Rome from 49 B.C. until 44 B.C., made many tax reforms

during his reign and made allowances for Jewish Sabbatical years but these considerations were short lived because Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. Herod the Great levied heavy taxes on the Jews as did the procurators of Judea. There were four principal kinds of taxes or duties: (1) a land tax, (2) a poll tax – a general tax levied on all individuals, (3) a personal property tax on exports and import, and (4) a house tax. In addition to these foreign taxes the Jews had their own religious financial obligations such as the half-shekel for the temple and the tithe. Some extremists among the first century Jews considered payment of taxes to Rome as an act of treason. (J.A. Sanders, “Tax and Taxes,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 520-521.)

We must also remember that the Roman government provided some protections which worked to the advantage of Christianity. Among these were Paul’s own Roman citizenship, the vast network of Roman roads, an excellent postal system, relative peace within the empire, and the ease of travel from one country to another.

The Jews and Theocracy

Complicating the whole scene was the Jewish view of theocracy – God ruled government. In a sense the Jews belonged to two competing and contradictory communities. They considered their nation to be ordained, directed, and favored by God yet they were in a world of Roman military, political, and economic might which dominated their nation. To declare their separation from either one of these entities created theological and political problems. They might be considered traitors by the entity which they denounced or left. Submission to any “foreign power” was obnoxious to the Jews and there can be no doubt that the Christian Jews had many of the same problems. Paul’s statements in Rom. 13:1-7 shows some of the underlying problems but no specific instance or problem is discussed. Instead the admonition is given that the state does not “bear the sword in vain.”

Some of the Jews entertained the possibility that the Messiah would come and deliver them from Roman oppression. This was especially characteristic of the Qumran community although there is no indication that the Roman church had any such expectations. However, in Acts 28:17-20, some of the Jewish leaders visited Paul when he was under house arrest in Rome. In their conversation Paul referred to “the hope of Israel” as the cause for his imprisonment. Certainly for Paul this had a very different meaning than it had for his Jewish guests. However, we can only assume that they would have considered this expression to refer to the coming of the kingly Messiah. A slight similarity to this is the idea of “liberty in Christ” which may have given some Christians, both Jew and Gentile, a false idea of freedom from Roman rule.

Nero ruled Rome from A.D. 54-68. Paul wrote the book of Romans about 57-58, just a short time after Nero became emperor. At that time it was generally thought that Nero would be a just and humane ruler but this was short lived. Suetonius (A.D. 69-122), a Roman historian, later wrote about Nero, saying, “I have brought together these acts of his, some of which are beyond criticism, while others are even deserving of slight praise, to separate them from his shameful and criminal deeds.” (C. Suetonius Tranquillus, “Lives of Twelve Caesars: Life of Nero,” Loeb Classical Library, 1914, p, 115.) Nero is remembered primarily for his evil deeds. When Paul wrote to the Roman church Nero would have been reigning for about 3 years and probably did

not pose a great threat to the Christians when compared with his later activities and opposition. As stated above, there were no empire-wide persecutions of Christians during Paul's lifetime but there were some local persecutions, including some in the city of Rome. The burning of Rome in A.D. 64 brought on some severe persecutions in the city. At the time Paul wrote Romans the overall hostility toward Christians was considerably lighter than was the case after A.D. 64.

(Note: Portions of the above historical material is from a lecture by Dr. Ronald Tyler, Professor Emeritus, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.)

Commentary: Rom. 13:1-7

It is important that we see that Paul is not advocating or referring to any one form of government but is stating that the existence of civil governments among nations is God's will. Some opponents of Christianity, even as early as the mid-first century, may have considered this new religion an opponent of the Roman government as in Acts 17:7. The Roman government was not favorable toward Christianity, and a little later it became a major persecutor of Christians. Paul himself had been the victim of persecutions both from religious zealots and governmental entities. God has declared that governments are to exist among men. Even some of the pagan writers had affirmed that governments exist under the direction of the gods. As oppressive as the Babylonians were, the book of Daniel affirms that God has a hand in civil authorities and governments. See Dan. 2:21, 2:37-38, 4:17, and others. In addition non-canonical religious writers among the Jews said that all civil governments exist under the sovereignty of God. To his Jewish readers Paul would have been reiterating something to which they had held throughout their history but the Christian teaching of "freedom in Christ" may have caused them to view things a little differently.

Verse 1 does not begin with the word, "Therefore." This has caused some commentators to conclude that this topic is not connected to anything which Paul has previously written. Sanday and Headlam have an interesting and informative statement regarding this.

The Apostle now passes from the duties of the individual Christian towards mankind in general to his duties in one defined sphere, namely towards the civil rulers. While we adhere to what has been said about the absence of a clearly-defined system or purpose in these chapters, we may notice that one main thread of thought which runs through them is the promotion of peace in all the relations of life. The idea of civil power may have been suggested by ver. 19 of the previous chapter, as being one of the ministers of the Divine wrath and retribution (ver. 4): at any rate the juxtaposition of the two passages would serve to remind St. Paul's readers that the condemnation of individual vengeance and retaliation does not apply to the action of the state in enforcing law; the state is God's minister, and it is the just wrath of God which is acting through it.

(Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 366.)

The phrase, *παρα ψυχῇ* (*para psuchē*) in verse 1, is a Hebraism which literally says, "Every soul." By using this expression some believe that Paul is not addressing only Christians but all mankind. All are to be under submission to the civil powers or to obey the civil powers. He uses

the word **υποτασσω** (*hupotassō*) which is translated “submit.” This is a flexible word rather than an absolute one. The word occurs with some frequency in the New Testament. Examples can be seen in Lk. 2:51, Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, Tit. 2:9, and I Pet. 2:18. Exceptions to this, in reference to civil authorities, were expressed by Peter and John in Acts 4:20 (“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”) and Acts 5:29 (“We must obey God rather than man”).

The next important word identifies those to whom we are to submit. These are “those in power” or “those who are in authority.” Usually the word **ἐξουσιαις** (*exousiais*) is translated “authorities” and it is frequently used, especially in the plural, to refer to civil authorities. However, it can refer to any entity or individuals who exercise power or authority. From the following descriptions it is obvious that Paul has in mind the civil or governmental authorities. Some commentators at one time believed that the word **ἐξουσιαις** (*exousiais*) referred to angelic authorities which were at work behind the political powers of the Empire. For the most part this is now considered a historical oddity although a few contemporary commentators still advocate this position. The fact that Paul speaks of paying taxes to the civil authorities and Peter speaks of these rulers as human being (I Pet. 2:13-14) precludes this sort of interpretation. (See Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 666 where he refers to some of those commentators.) The latter part of verse 1 gives an explanation for the importance of this submission. The power behind all of it is that there is no authority except that which has been established by God and the powers that exist have been ordained by God.

In verse 2 he shows that the Christian’s submission to those civil authorities is evidence of one’s loyalty to God. Paul is not referring to any particular ruler or system of government having been set in order by God but he is showing that the existence of civil government is God-ordained. Resistance to these civil authorities is resistance to the God-ordained institution of civil government and such conduct will come under God’s judgment. The Old Testament history of Israel is replete with instances of God’s use of various rulers, many times very evil rulers, to accomplish his purposes.

Verse 3 shows that civil government is for the benefit of all. It is not a terror to those who obey the laws, but to those who disobey. Paul asks a question and then gives the answer. “Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.” There is a general but unstated assumption here, *i.e.* that those governments govern fairly and justly. This is obviously not true in every instance and it was not always true of the Roman government. In this verse Paul is speaking in general terms about the existence of civil governments not of specific situations. For the Christians in the early centuries this certainly posed a grave difficulty because of the localized persecutions and by the middle second century the Empire initiated persecutions. The realism of I Pet. 3:13-17, written later than Romans, must also be considered. Peter realizes that even when one does what is right he may still be punished (persecuted). There is no conflict here between Peter and Paul because they are speaking of different conditions. Paul’s later statement to Timothy, “All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,” II Tim. 3:12, was written after Nero had begun localized persecutions against Christians. Also in this verse Paul refers to these authorities as **ἀρχοντες** (*archontes*) which is the common word for rulers or magistrates.

Verse 4 is a corollary to verse 3. God is the ultimate possessor of all authority and he may use civil governments to accomplish his purposes. Therefore civil government is “God’s servant to do good.” It is interesting that Paul uses the term **διακονος** (*diakonos*), translated servant or minister, rather than **δουλος** (*doulos*) which means a slave or bondservant. Neither of these words has a theological basis but **διακονος** (*diakonos*) came to be translated “deacon” which ultimately became the title for a “church office” but this is a misuse of the word. However, there is another side to the function of civil government as God’s servant. It is also his servant to punish those who do wrong because the civil authorities do not “bear the sword in vain. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

Verse 5 adds another dimension to the reason for obedience to the civil authorities. It is because of one’s conscience. The Greek word is **συνειδησιν** (*suneidēsin*) which is a cognate of **συννοια** (*sunoida*). This is a compound word made up of **συν** (*sun*), the basic meaning of which is “with, in the company of, or accompaniment” and **οιδα** (*oida*) which means “having knowledge of, or to know someone or something.” When combined, these words came to mean one’s “basic knowledge within himself,” and it is therefore translated “conscience.” (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 798-799.) Paul uses this word more than any other New Testament writer as in Rom. 2:15, II Cor. 1:12, 4:2, 5:11, and I Tim. 4:3. The word deals with the moral-ethical force of one’s personal values and convictions. Paul’s message is that the morally and ethically good citizen will recognize and honor the need for responsible civil government, leading him to obey the laws of the civil authorities. We must remember however that conscience responds positively when one acts in accordance with what he *believes* is right but it responds negatively when he does what he *believes* is wrong. Notice that in Acts 23:1 Paul claimed that he had always acted in good conscience toward God. Would this have included the time when he persecuted the church? Conscience is not our infallible guide so Paul links this to his teaching that civil government is ordained by God. Fear of wrath and one’s clear conscience, though legitimate components of one’s motivation, are not an adequate basis for obedience. Conscientiously following God’s directives must be primary.

Verse 6 could be the answer to confusing ideas which may have permeated the church in Rome. Paul uses an unusual word in verse 6 as he speaks of the tax collecting authorities as God’s servants. The Greek word **leitourgoi** (*leitrougoi*), is translated “servants.” This is a compound word made up of **λειτος** (*leitōs*) which means “public” and **εργον** (*ergon*) meaning “one who performs a service.” This word and its cognates is used only about nine times in the New Testament, and is variously translated “minister, ministry, ministration, or service.” In the secular Greek world the word was used to describe a person performing a public service. It was used infrequently in reference to religious public service. Examples of this usage can be seen in Lk. 1:23 where it is referring to the public ministry of Zacharias. In Heb. 8:6 it is used to refer to “the ministry” of Jesus as mediator of the new covenant. In Heb. 9:21 the author uses the word to refer to “the ceremonies” of the sprinkling blood on certain vessels used in the tabernacle worship. Ordinarily the word **δουλος** (*doulos*), bondservant, would probably be expected but the emphasis on service for public benefit as seen in the word **leitourgoi** (*leitrougoi*) is probably the reason for Paul’s usage here.

As mentioned above, the payment of taxes to a foreign government was detestable to the Jews and Jesus was challenged on payments made to Caesar. In addition to this, the idea of the “free-

dom in Christ,” may have caused some to refuse to pay taxes to Rome. Paul links the payment of taxes to their basic obligation to abide by governmental regulations since those who collect your taxes are God’s servants who are giving their time to these things. See the section above on the payment of taxes. James Dunn says that Tacitus, the Roman historian, wrote about the persistent complaints against Rome’s high taxes in A.D. 58 which was the time when Romans was written. (Dunn, *op cit.*, on CD.) The taxes of which Paul is speaking are generally thought to have been the property tax and poll taxes. Verse 7 gives the conclusion of this. Give to everyone that which is due him whether it is taxes, revenues, respect, or honor.

Love, the Fulfillment of the Law: 13:8-10

In 12:17 Paul began writing about love of one’s enemies and now he returns to the topic of love. In the passage on civil government he concluded by saying, “Give to everyone what you owe him” (verse 7) and he enumerated some of those obligations. In verse 8 he gives a negative corollary to this by saying, “Owe no one anything except to love one another,” adding that one who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. To love your neighbor as yourself is the summation of the law including the commandments against adultery, murder, theft, greed, “and whatever other commandment there may be” (13:9). We are reminded of Jesus’ identification of the two greatest commandments – first to love God completely and second to love your neighbor as yourself. Neither Jesus nor Paul was minimizing the necessity of obedience to God’s specific commandments but each was showing that love is the undergirding of all relationships including our relationship to God as well as to other human beings. Christian obedience is not simple conformity to a code. Leander Keck expresses Paul’s thought in this way: “Mutual love in *not* the alternative to obligatory law-demands but its mode; mutual love is the way requisite obedience to law is actualized.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 326.)

In Jn. 13:34 Jesus made a similar statement by giving “a new commandment” and John refers to love in a somewhat similar manner in I Jn. 2:7-8. When love dominates, the do’s and don’ts of human relationships have a way of taking care of themselves. In this, the motivation behind obedience is lifted above legal demands and placed on the highest plain. In this way Paul shows that love, in order to be truly Christian must include those with whom we agree and those with whom we differ – those who are our allies and those who are our adversaries. The result of this is that “love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (13:10).

We must take this section seriously and in context. The illusions of contemporary life and culture see love as a sort of disposition of mind and emotions and a sort of “positive attitude” toward people and life’s circumstances. However, in that concept there is little translation into the difficult relationships of life. In these verses Paul has challenged that concept. The love of which Paul speaks transcends codified legal behavior. In the Roman church there were Jews and Gentiles and the past animosity which may have existed could be overcome only with the kind of love which “is the fulfillment of the law.” Love as a sentiment is relatively easy to come by through a simple change in one’s behavior. Love which is a true fulfillment of the demands of the law deals not just with behavior but with the whole person. Love does not displace law and obedience but it becomes the instrument through which law and obedience are transformed into godliness and holiness.

Vigilant Conduct: 13:11-14

Paul now links his instructions concerning love to the future – possibly an eschatological theme. In a sense, this is the conclusion of the general message he began in 12:1. In 12:2 he said that his addressees were not to be conformed to this world (age) but they were to be transformed by the renewal of their minds. So, in 13:11 he tells them to wake up to the reality that their ultimate salvation is nearer now than when they first embraced Christ and his gospel. Compare his statements in I Thess. 5:1-11.

He begins this admonition with the Greek phrase, **και τουτο ειδοτες τον καιρον** (*kai touto eidotes ton kairon*). This has been translated in a variety of ways in English versions: “And that, knowing the time, that now” (KJV), “Besides this, you know what time it is” (NRSV), “And do this, understanding the present time” (NIV). The key word in the phrase is **καιρον** (*kairon*) which is translated “time.” The Greeks expressed time with two different words: **χρονος** (*chronos*) and **καιρος** (*kairos*). The word **χρονος** (*chronos*) was used to refer to a time period or a long time while the word **καιρος** (*kairos*) referred to a particular point in time such as a season of the year, harvest time, or a specific instant of time. It was used to identify a particular favorable or unfavorable time. This is the word Paul uses here when he admonishes his readers to wake up from their slumber, visualizing the Christian period as that point in time when they are to awaken to service to the risen Savior. He visualizes this by saying, “the night is nearly over; the day is almost here.” The day of which he speaks is a reference to the Parousia, the second coming of Christ. Sanday and Headlam express the meaning in this way: “The time of trial on earth is looked upon as a night of gloom, to be followed by a bright morning. We must arouse ourselves from slumber and prepare ourselves for the light. . . . For our completed salvation, no longer that hope of salvation which sustains us here, is appreciably nearer for us than when we first accepted the faith the Messianic message.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 378.) Up to this point there is relatively little in the book of Romans dealing with eschatology. However, see 2:5-11 and 8:18-26. Paul’s admonition is, “Put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Fitzmyer characterizes Paul’s statement in this way: “Christians cannot afford to remain in the unprotected condition of scantily clothed sleepers at a time when the situation calls for ‘armor.’ . . . Those who live in light, i.e., those justified by Christ, cannot conduct themselves as though they were still in darkness. Their deeds cannot be those ‘of the flesh’; recall the catalog of such deeds that Paul gives in Gal. 5:19.” (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 683.)

In verse 13 he shows the contrast of behaviors. The Christians at Rome are to conduct themselves with decency which personifies living in the light of day. Orgies and drunkenness, sexual immorality and debauchery, quarrelling and jealousy are to have no part in their conduct. Instead, “clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ,” not even thinking about the gratification of the desires, **επιθυμιας** (*epithumias*) of the flesh. Religious celebrations within the pagan cultures frequently involved sexual orgies and drunkenness. We must remember that the Gentile Christians generally came out of that religious environment and such admonitions as this would have had very distinct meaning to them. The desires, **επιθυμιας** (*epithumias*) of the flesh were always a challenge to them because their past religious life had been characterized by those evil practices.

Chapter XV

The Weak and the Strong

Rom.14:1—15:13

Introduction to Rom. 14:1—15:13

Paul now passes on to another topic but he will relate it to his previous teaching on love. In chapter 14 he continues to deal with the practical applications of the principles laid down in chapters 12-13. Dealing with the weaker brother or the stronger brother always presents challenges to the followers of Christ. Without doubt, this section is one of the most personally demanding passages in the entire New Testament. It deals with overt behavior but it relates this to the inner spiritual strength of the Christian. The “stronger brother” is not always the person who has been a Christian the *longest* or the one who *knows the most*, nor is the “weaker brother” necessarily the newer convert. Many other factors must be considered.

In every phase of life there are some matters which are essentials and some which are matters of indifference. God speaks directly to some questions of life and doctrine but in other matters he gives us no instructions at all. These are left to our discretion but even here there are some important guidelines relative to the weaker brother. A common problem within any society is to sort out those things. For one person a certain practice may have an important, perhaps even a sacred meaning while another individual sees no value to that observance. To that person these are matters of indifference. One’s religious, ethical, and moral training have a strong bearing on the things which are sacred or things which are indifferent to him.

Many difficulties, individual and congregational, arise out of these differences. At times, these difficulties can become a controlling factor in congregational life or individual relationships. Paul gives considerable attention to this problem but its application in contemporary life is not an easy task. What are the limits of Christian freedom? What are the demands made on the “weaker brother?” What are the demands made on the “stronger brother?” How do we identify a fellow Christian as the “weaker brother” or the “stronger brother?” Is the subject of a controversy a matter of “faith” (revealed truth) or a matter of “opinion?” These and other questions may have significant consequences in the life of the church. It is interesting that the Roman letter was written from Corinth where the church was filled with division. Some of the differences which Paul addresses in the Roman letter were also present in the Corinthian church.

The Jewish background of Christianity was a difficulty to some Gentile Christians. Food laws and the observance of certain days were among the difficulties which arose. How do we measure the latitude of Christian liberty? These controversies have the power to destroy a congregation and in this section we are challenged to see essential elements of the Christian faith contrasted with those things which are matters of one’s own personal preference.

Conflict and Resolution: 14:1-12

In this section Paul deals specifically with eating meat, drinking wine, and observance of holy days. Paul does not specifically identify the “weak” and the “strong” but 14:14-18 indicates that

the Jewish Christians – those who were very restrictive – are being treated as the weak ones and the strong are the more mature who do not have dietary restrictions or observance of certain holy days in their background. Paul appears to be addressing the eating of meat vs. strict vegetarians. Vegetarianism was not a part of the Jewish Law and it has caused some commentators to believe that the Gentiles who had some such aversion to eating meat at all were the “weaker” brothers. Both biblical and non-Biblical sources show us that vegetarianism was practiced among some Jews. See Dan. 1:8, 10:3, and II Macc. 5:27 (Apocrypha). The weaker brother objects that some Christians do not consider certain practices essential elements of the Christian faith. In Paul’s scenario he pictures the Jewish Christian trying to bind those observances on others. On the other hand, the stronger brother views his counterpart as one who is spiritually immature basically saying, “Grow up. There’s nothing wrong in what I am doing.” These kinds of differences are frequently viewed as “conservative vs. liberal” or “legalist vs. progressive.” We can’t help but wonder what Paul might have known about the problems in the Roman church regarding these things because the tenor of the writing seems to show acquaintance with some specifics although he deals with the problem in a general way. As he faces this situation he says that love on the part of both factions is the only solution. Uppermost in his mind is the preservation of love, unity, and harmony in the congregation but always in compliance with the fundamentals of the gospel and the example of Christ. Whether “weak” or “strong” they were to accept one another. It is of the utmost importance that we remember that Paul is not speaking of matters of faith (God’s directives) but in matters of one’s opinion or indifference – observance or non-observance of certain days, eating or not eating certain foods, drinking or not drinking wine, etc.

Commentary

Verse 1 begins, “Welcome among you anyone who is weak in faith without passing judgment on disputable matters.” In this opening we have two important Greek words: *πιστει* (*pistei*), which means “faith” and *προσλαμβανεσθε* (*proslambanesthe*) which means “to take to yourself as a companion or an associate,” “to receive kindly and hospitably” or “to take into one’s household.”

We must ask ourselves how Paul is using the words “faith,” “weak,” and “strong” in this context. Sanday makes an important observation on this verse: “‘Weakness in faith’ means an inadequate grasp of the great principle of salvation by faith in Christ; the consequence of which will be an anxious desire to make this salvation more certain by the scrupulous fulfillment of formal rules.” (Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 384.) One should not interpret this passage or Sanday’s comment to mean that obedience to God’s commandments is to be lightly considered. The passage is getting at the contrast between the doctrine of salvation by works of merit and salvation by grace through trust in the atonement of Christ. This becomes clear as we look at the entire section, 14:1—15:13. Many times those who are “weak in faith” may consider themselves as “strong in faith,” contending for the stricter behavior code. Paul’s message here, and in the earlier part of the book, is that such an attitude may lead to the wrong concept of faith as the means of accessing God’s grace. It is obvious that Paul is considering the group he calls “the weak in faith” to be those whose convictions demand that they not eat meat or drink wine and they must observe of certain holy days. We can imagine a Christian Jew contending that the Messiah did not come to release them from dietary regulations or teach them to set aside the observance of the holy days of Judaism.

Paul is warning the readers not to go against their own personal convictions. In verse 2 he uses the word *πιστευει* (*pisteuei*), a cognate of *πιστις* (*pistis*), to refer to one man's faith which allows him to eat everything but another man's faith is weak and he eats only vegetables. The Christian faith of which Paul has spoken in the earlier chapters – the faith in justification – is not intended here. The “weakness of faith” spoken of here is the weakness in an individual's personal assurance of his own convictions. That is, he is convinced – he believes – that his actions are harmonious with his beliefs. He is not violating his conscience. His convictions “permit him” to do certain things. This is the man whose grasp of the faith of the gospel is deep enough that he realizes that one's justification is not earned by his rigid adherence to each command but it is the gift of God by one's trust (faith) in the atonement of Christ. That person is “strong in faith” because he has a clearer picture of the grace of God.

In verses 3-4 Paul addresses the conduct and attitude of the strong toward the weak and the weak toward the strong. Instead of a self-righteous attitude on the part of either of these Christians, each must remember that he is not to look upon the other with disdain. The brother who is “weak in faith” has difficulty understanding salvation by grace vs. salvation by works. Consequently he believes that his strict observance of the ordinances of dietary restrictions, etc. makes his justification and his salvation more secure. In spite of these differences, Paul's message is that such a person should not be shunned or looked down upon. Instead, he should be loved and respected by the Christian community and fully accepted. In our relationship with other Christians there is no room for pride and contempt on the one hand or excessive censoring and legalism on the other hand.

Paul illustrates this by making reference to the master and servant. The servant is responsible to his own master and you are not in the position to judge another man's servant. He will stand because the Lord is able to make him stand. God accepts both, so who are you to judge the other person? It is difficult for us to remember that God alone is the judge and none of us has either the right or the necessary information to make such judgments.

In verses 5-6 Paul looks at some of the particulars of this problem. The observance of certain days, presumably the Sabbath or other religious days, may be celebrated by some Christians while others do not observe those days. The “weak” contended that certain days should be observed while the “strong” treat every day the same. Paul shows that there is neither virtue nor vice connected with observance or non-observance. Those who wanted to celebrate a certain day were free to do so, but those who chose not to observe such celebrations have that right. These were matters of indifference, not matters of salvation or God's commands. There is no evil in having different convictions on such matters. It is interesting that Paul wanted to get to Jerusalem before Pentecost, possibly because he still celebrated that day. (Acts 20:16.) He also shaved his head in Cenchrea because he had a vow. (Acts 18:18.) When he arrived in Jerusalem he paid for the vows made by four men. These vows presumably conformed to the Law of Moses since Paul went to the temple for this. (Acts 21:20-26.)

In verses 5-6 the apostle says that every person should be fully convinced in his own mind. If one observes a certain day or does not observe a certain day, or if he eats only vegetables or eats everything he is doing it in reference to the Lord and giving thanks to the Lord. The important thing is that whichever route is taken, the motivation is to be praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Verses 7-8 remind us that none of us lives in a vacuum. We are members of the community of Christians, the church. The basic level is this: whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. This must be recognized and accepted by each of us. Therefore the weaker brother is not to look on the stronger brother with disdain and the stronger brother is not to look at the weaker brother with disdain. Neither one can refuse to accept the other. Neither one can seek to judge the other. Both are to live in honor to God and also to die in honor to God. With that in view, the differences just cited about eating or not eating, observing certain days or not observing certain days is irrelevant. Honoring God is relevant.

Verses 9-12 place all of this in its true perspective. Christ died and rose again that he might be the master of both the living and the dead. That is, he is the sovereign of all. The death and resurrection of Christ is the heart of Paul's theological stance. He now reverts to his favorite argumentative form, the diatribe. He asks the question, based on Christ's sovereignty: "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?" (14:10) Paul stresses Christ's Lordship as the basis for his next statement, *i.e.* we will all stand before Christ and be judged by him. This is as if Paul were asking, "Since we will all be judged by Christ, not by each other, what right do you think you have to judge your brother? Christ is his judge just as Christ is your judge." Therefore we must control our own behavior and our own attitudes toward our fellow Christians because each of us is accountable to the one who is the sovereign of both the dead and the living.

Paul has done a masterful job of showing the essence of justification and the necessity of living the Christian life – chapters 1-13 – and in chapter 14 he shows us the liberty which we must recognize not just for ourselves but also for our weaker brother. The apostle does this cautiously, showing the balance between one's striving to live within the bounds of divine truth while recognizing the latitude of freedom which he enjoys in Christ. The remainder of the equation is that the weaker (or stronger) brother also enjoys the same liberty as you claim for yourself. He too is striving to live within the bounds of divine truth. Ultimately we will all stand before the judge of all the earth confessing to God as each of us gives an account of his stewardship of God's gifts.

Paul uses Is. 45:23 to illustrate his point. The context of the Isaiah passage is interesting and important for us to consider. Chapter 45 of Isaiah begins with the Lord's statement of how he will use Cyrus, king of Persia – a pagan – to bring about his own will among nations of the earth. This is reminiscent of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the tree and the messenger who cut the tree down (Dan. 4:19-27). In verse 25 Daniel tells the king, "Seven times will pass over you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." The Isaiah passage shows how God used Nebuchadnezzar to discipline and punish his own people and later used Cyrus for a different purpose. It was during the reign of Cyrus the Persian that Judah was released from the Babylonian Exile and returned to their homeland. Chapter 45 of Isaiah deals with Judah's potential future in the Land. God will give them prosperity and he will be their Savior. Everyone will bow down, not to the idols of their past but to the Living God, and they will say, "In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength." (Is. 45:23-24.) In all of this Paul is showing that judgment is God's business not man's prerogative. He points out that there are some things which are matters of indifference and we are not to allow those things to become divisive, destroying the unity of the church.

Dangers of Stumbling Blocks: 14:13-23

Paul begins this section with the word, “Therefore” indicating that the observations and conclusions which follow are based on the principles laid out in 14:1-12. Although the “strong” realize that there is nothing which is unclean of itself, this is not the only consideration when one’s motive is love. The “strong” do not exist by themselves but they are parts of the whole just as the “weak” are parts of the whole. The temptation for the “strong” to judge and condemn the “weak” cannot be practiced. Christ died for all, and there cannot be arrogant self-righteousness which destroys the weaker brother. On the other hand, those who are weak are not to violate the limitations imposed by their own consciences – their own convictions – just because others “eat unclean meats.” Their faith – convictions – is to be held in honesty and sincerity.

Verses 13-23 lay out four important applications of the principles of 14:1-12. First he speaks of the danger of casting a stumbling block in front of a brother. Second is the importance of living peaceful lives in edifying one another. Third, they should keep their private beliefs – matters of one’s own opinion and practices – to themselves and should not disrupt the unity of the body of Christ. In that way one can live in harmony with himself. “Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves” 14:22b. Fourth, one must live within the bounds of his own beliefs. Notice the interesting use which Paul makes of the word “faith” in verse 23.

Commentary

Verse 13 is a reiteration of what he has said previously, *i.e.* don’t pass judgment on another Christian over things which have no moral, ethical, or doctrinal significance. Actually, Paul is now going to turn the situation around. Instead of continuing to speak of judging the brother he is going to address the danger of stumbling blocks. Christian love for others is a higher calling and, as such, it demands that we not place a stumbling block in the path of another, possibly destroying the faith of one for whom Christ died.

In this verse we have three important Greek words – **κρινω** (*krinō*) **προσκομμα** (*proskomma*) and **σκανδαλον** (*skandalon*). We will take them in order. First there is **κρινω** (*krinō*). This is a very broad and flexible word meaning “to judge, to make a determination, make a distinction, separate, or to bring under question.” Paul uses this word in two different ways in this verse and in doing so he forms a sort of play on words. First he says that his addressees should not “pass judgment” on others meaning that they were not to condemn or censor others in matters of indifference. Following this he uses the word in a different sense saying that they should make necessary and important determinations concerning a situation. That is, one is to weigh the elements of a situation and make a proper response. Here Paul says that this determination is that they should not place a stumbling block in front of another brother. The word translated “stumbling block” is **προσκομμα** (*proskomma*) which means “an occasion of sinning, a stumbling block, a shock to one’s moral or religious sensitivities.” It is a strong word used three times by Paul, Rom. 14:13, 14:20 and I Cor. 8:9. In each of these he is speaking of one whose conduct tends to lead a weaker brother into sin or that which is a genuine shock to his religious sensibilities. Paul explains this more completely as he moves along.

This is described further by the use of the word **σκανδαλον** (*skandalon*). This is also a very

strong word which means “a trap, an enticement, a temptation in one’s way, that which causes revulsion or presents an impediment, anything which causes one to stumble, or that which is scandalous and causes ruin or destruction.” (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 760.) The English word “scandal” comes from this word. It is translated sometimes as “an occasion of falling, an obstacle which causes sin, to entice one to sin or fall away.” Notice how these three Greek words combine to describe a serious offense. This is not addressing the complaints, “I don’t like what your do,” or “I object to your beliefs,” or “You ought not do that because it offends me.” This is a situation in which the behavior of one Christian is causing another Christian to commit sin or to fall away from the faith.

In verse 14 Paul identifies at least one of the specifics of the problem *i.e.* some were eating unclean meats as defined in the Law. Although this was settled in the events of Acts 10:9-15 – “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” – it was difficult for many Jewish Christians to give up the practice. In Rom. 14:14 Paul said that eating meat which was formerly considered unclean, was not problem to him – “I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself.” However, he goes on to deal with the conscientious position of others. Those who are convinced that it is wrong to eat “unclean” meats should refrain from doing so on the grounds of violation of one’s conscience. In I Cor. 8:4 Paul deals with a similar problem in Corinth although in that passage he is relating it to eating meat which had been sacrificed to idols. His major premise in the I Corinthians passage is that since an idol has no life as a god it is of no consequence to eat meat sacrificed to an idol. However, in I Cor. 8:7 he lays down a principle which is similar to that in Rom 14:14. It is a warning that some Christians are not yet convinced that eating such meat is all right. In view of that he says that one who doubts but goes ahead and eats the meat which is questionable in his own mind is violating his conscience and this is unacceptable.

In verses 15-18 he says that the result of such action distresses (grieves) another brother. In doing this “you are no longer acting in love.” This is the fundamental guiding principle in Christian relationships. Furthermore, Paul says it is possible that your action may destroy the faith of another, one “for whom Christ died.” This places one’s relational behavior on a very high, albeit very difficult plane. Our liberties are limited by the needs of others. The apostle concludes, “Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.” In this context Paul uses a very strong word, **βλασφημεισθω** (*blasphēmeisthō*) which is translated “spoken of as evil.” The kingdom of God is not made up of such trivialities as eating and drinking but of the grand principles of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. This is what pleases God. Once again, notice that Paul is not speaking of behavior which is objectionable or which another Christian might not like but he is addressing that which destroys the faith of another. In contemporary situations some people, with some frequency, complain, “That person’s beliefs and behavior are a stumbling block to me.” This passage is then used to try to get others to conform to one’s person’s likes or dislikes but that is not the message of this passage. Otherwise, individuals as well as congregations would be guided by the strongest complainers or the “lowest common denominators” and this is far from Paul’s intended message.

Verses 19-23 give us Paul’s conclusions and observations concerning this topic. He deals with three principles. First, in verse 19 he says that they should make every effort to do that which leads to peace and mutual edification. He restates the principles of peace between brothers in Christ. These are paramount when dealing with Christian relationships.

Second, in verses 20-21 he says that it is necessary that we not to do anything which causes our brother to stumble. This broad statement limits the liberties of each person. We experience this principle in our daily in lives. The life of every husband has limitations because he has the responsibility of a wife. Likewise, the wife's life is limited because of her responsibilities to her husband, parents to children, children to teachers, employee to employer, etc. With the principle of love in place, the Christian adds important responsibilities to some of these limitations. We might say that it is axiomatic that the stronger the love we have for another the stronger are our obligations to that person and consequently the limiting of our liberties. Where love dominates, these limitations and obligations can also be joyful and mutually edifying. Notice how strongly he concludes this in verse 21.

Third, in verse 22 Paul says that a person should always be assured within his own belief system (his own convictions) that he is living according to what he believes is God's will. It is interesting that Paul uses the word **πιστις** (*pistis*) at this point. It means "convictions, belief or faith, honesty and integrity, firm persuasion," etc. It is a broad word which we usually translate "faith." Paul uses it here, not speaking of one's trust in Christ's atonement as he has consistently used in chapters 1-8, but to speak of one's personal integrity. He says that one's strong spiritual stamina should not be paraded in a self-righteous fashion but should be held between himself and God. Such a display can be injurious to the weaker brother. The man who lives in such personal integrity is blessed indeed. On the other hand, if a person participates in behavior which is inconsistent with his own convictions (*e.g.* eating unclean meat), this man is condemned because is acting contrary to his own convictions (faith, belief). Paul's conclusion is, those who do not act out of conviction (faith) are committing sin.

Bearing the Burdens of the Weak: Rom. 15:1-13

In this block Paul gives key instructions on how we are to handle such controversies. In verses 1-6 he is quite specific but verses 7-13 are more general in their content. Although the specifics deal with the Jew-Gentile problems of eating or not eating "unclean" meats, Paul will show how the principles involved reach much farther than the controversy in question.

Commentary

Verses 1-4 show us that we must allow for spiritual immaturity and spiritual growth in all people. A new convert may be weak in faith and have many difficulties or past beliefs to overcome. Each of us has a certain amount of "baggage" which he or she brings into this newfound relationship with Christ. Knowledge is not the only consideration, nor is age or longevity. Many factors are involved both directly and indirectly. Patience, love, and sharing the burdens of others are necessary ingredients. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). The weakness of faith of a fellow Christian is not a reason for the "strong" to ignore the "weak" brother or to look down on him.

In verse 3 Paul uses the word **βασταζειν** (*bastazein*) which is translated "to bear or to carry." It is a present active infinitive meaning that it has linear action – "to continue to bear or continue to carry." Paul fittingly uses Christ as an example of bearing (carrying) the failings of the weak. This word, **βασταζειν** (*bastazein*), is the word used by Christ when he spoke of the life of his

followers “bearing the cross” (Lk. 14:27) and the literal description of Jesus carrying his own cross (Jn. 19:17). The strong must place the spiritual needs of the weak ahead of one’s own personal needs.

This is not the same word which is translated “bear with” or “endure” as in Matt. 17:17, II Cor. 11:1, 4, and elsewhere. That word, **ανεχομαι** (*enechomai*) means “to endure patiently or to suffer with.” Paul does not say we are simply to “put up with” or “endure” the weak but we are to share and bear their burdens. Notice that Paul is not endorsing the idea that the strong are to cater to the whims of the weak. Instead, they are to share the burdens of the weak, showing themselves as examples of strength, and thus encouraging the weak to become strong. Using Christ as an example again he shows that the Lord was willing to bear the burdens of his followers with patience and love. The apostle’s Old Testament illustration is from Ps. 69:9, the same passage which says, “zeal for your house has consumed me.” In its original context the psalmist is speaking of his own enemies, his problems, and his perils, yet he has been zealous for the Lord’s house. New Testament writers use Ps. 69:9 as a reminder of similar circumstances. Paul backs up this by saying that we should learn from those examples of endurance and encouragement which results in hope.

Verses 4-6 tell us of Paul’s prayer for harmony and peace in the Roman church. In addition, he gives us some insight about the use of Old Testament Scripture. As harmony and peace come from God, so also the God-given Scriptures (the Old Testament) bring endurance and comfort. An important key to this is that such harmony comes when Christians live not for themselves alone but for others in the Christian community. In addition, knowledge of Scripture is essential for such unity. We need to remember that the church of Paul’s day did not have the New Testament. It was in the process of being written until about A.D. 95. The Bible of the first century church was actually the Old Testament and here Paul speaks of its use. These Scriptures teach us two important things. First they emphasize endurance, and second they teach us hope. Certainly, Paul is not saying that the value of the Old Testament is limited to this, but he emphasizes these aspects of it because it supports his message. Also, see I Cor. 10:1-12, particularly verse 11. In that passage Paul shows that the Old Testament gives us examples of God’s dealing with the Israelites and shows us important principles of the God-man relationship.

In this verse Paul uses the word **παρακλησεως** (*paraklēseōs*) which can be translated “comfort, exhortation, or a cheering and supporting influence.” It is a compound word made up of **παρα** (*para*) meaning “from or out of” (emphasis on origin) and **καλεω** (*kaleō*) meaning “to call for or to invite.” When combined to form the word **παρακλησεως** (*paraklēseōs*), it came to mean “to call to one’s side for encouragement, to comfort or offer exhortation.” (For further information on this word see Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 623 and Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 483.) We should notice that Paul links all of this to the example of Christ’s sacrifice. In order to understand the impact of the New Testament we must experience the impact of the Old Testament. This was Paul’s point. Joseph Fitzmyer says, “When Jesus’ suffering is viewed against sacred history [the Old Testament, J.B.], it takes on a deeper meaning. Seen in this larger perspective, it gives Christians a basis for endurance (**υπομονη** – *hupomonē*), that character that gives strength in persecution. It also supplies a basis for their hope.” (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 703.)

Verses 7-13, the conclusion of this section, is the apostle’s final admonition to the Roman church

for them to accept each other – the Jew and the Gentile, the weak and the strong. This is a purposeful generalization summarizing much of what he has said in 14:1—15:6. Just as Christ has received you – sinful people whose good works can never bring justification – so also you must receive your brother in Christ. Such acceptance does not mean that you approve of his weaknesses or his sins but, as Christ accepts you, so you also must learn to accept your brother. The word *προσλαμβάνεσθε* (*proslambanesthe*) is usually translated “to accept.” It is in the present imperative tense, middle voice. Arndt and Gingrich show that this word, when in the middle voice, emphasizes the necessity to “receive or accept into one’s society, in (to) one’s home, or circle of acquaintances.” (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 724.) This word adds strength to the importance of Christian fellowship and one’s whole relationship to his fellow Christians.

Verse 8 attaches all of this to the fact the Son of God became a Jew in order to bring the Gentiles as well as the Jews to God in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, “in you shall all of the families of the earth be blessed” Gen. 12:1-3. In this way, Paul shows that Christ became a “servant of the Jews.” All of this came about “so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8-9).

In 15:9-12 Paul invokes four Old Testament passages to illustrate his point. The first citation (verse 9) is taken from II Sam. 22:50 and Ps. 18:49. The theme of the psalm is the poet’s praise of God for the Lord’s divine intervention in delivering him from his enemies. Since II Sam. 22 is the Song of David we conclude that the Ps. 18, which contains some of the same material, is a psalm of David. This agrees with the superscription of the psalm. In its Old Testament context the psalm cannot be considered a Messianic prophetic statement and Paul uses it simply in an illustrative way. The expression “to the nations” and similar phrases of praise are seen with some frequency in the Old Testament, but we cannot conclude that these are necessarily referring to the universality of the gospel. See I Chron. 16:24, 31, Ps. 57:9, 96:3, and others. The psalmist had just been delivered from the power of “the nations” and his proclamation of thanksgiving is to declare God’s name everywhere.

We should notice that in each of the citations in Rom. 15:9-12 the Greek word *εθνος* (*ethnos*) occurs. In the New Testament this word is translated “nations” about sixth-four times and it is translated “Gentiles” about ninety-three times. It is a broad word referring to non-Jewish people. The word *Ελλην* (*hellēn*) occurs about ten times and is almost always translated “Greek” although a few times it is translated “Gentile.”

The second citation (verse 10) comes from the Song of Moses in Deut. 32:43. Moses is reminiscing about Israel’s history both prior to and during his own leadership of the nation. In this he praises God for his protection of Israel and his anticipation for God’s continued blessings on his people. Again, Paul uses this in an illustrative way.

The third citation (verse 11) is from Ps. 117:1. Once again the psalmist uses this to express his praise of God and Paul uses it to illustrate his point. This psalm is the shortest “chapter” in the entire Bible and we have no information concerning the authorship or situation which gave rise to the psalm.

The fourth citation is identified by Paul. The quotation in Rom. 15:12 comes from Is. 11:10

where the prophet speaks of the “root of Jesse.” The entire eleventh chapter of Isaiah is a prophetic statement of the coming of the Davidic Messiah, the root of Jesse (who was the father of David). There can be no doubt that Isaiah had the Messiah in mind as he wrote. In this we have a sort of rallying point for the Gentiles (nations) as Isaiah describes the beauties of the Messianic rule. It appears to have been characteristic of the Jews of Paul’s day to discount the acceptance of the Gentiles into God’s kingdom. However, a great part of the New Testament deals with the problems which this presented.

This concluding verse of the letter, (15:13) is Paul’s brief prayer for the peace, tranquility, fidelity, joy, and the overflowing of hope for the people to whom he is writing.

Chapter XVI

Personal Notes and Final Salutations

Rom. 15:14 – 16:27

Introduction and Summary

Paul has completed the substance of the epistle and now he turns to personal notes. Part of this final section is devoted to a statement of his affection for the Roman Christians and this gives rise to an explanation of the strength of his earlier argument in the epistle. Many commentators consider this an apology but it is really his explanation. He has not been as severe in Romans as he was in either I Corinthians or Galatians and he is convinced that his recipients are full of goodness, complete in knowledge, and competent to teaching others (15:14). He also explains his mission to the Gentiles. The fact that he has been so busy proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles has prevented him from coming to them.

He wants the Roman Christians to know something of his travel plans and the contributions he is taking to Jerusalem. He makes the observation that since the Gentiles have benefitted from the spiritual blessings originating from the Jews, and it is appropriate that they, the Gentiles, now share their own physical blessings with their needy Jewish-Christian brothers. After he delivers the contributions from the Macedonians and the Achaians he plans to go to Spain and wants to stop for a visit in Rome. Finally he asks for their prayers on his behalf, realizing that there are unreasonable Jews in Jerusalem who may present an obstacle. Chapter 16 has a lengthy set of greetings sent to his friends and acquaintances in Rome. This is mixed with some exhortations for unity and his final doxology.

Commentary: Paul's Personal Notes. Rom. 15:14-22

After reading the first 14 chapters of the epistle we might conclude that Paul's opinion of the Roman church was that it was very defective in its beliefs and practices. In 15:14-15 he says that he has spoken strongly (boldly) to them yet he expresses his continued confidence in them.

He has unfolded the very essence of the gospel to them, uncovering their lack of understanding and has strongly admonished them concerning the weak and strong brothers. In some ways we can see Paul as the "eternal optimist." In spite of the severity of their errors, he recognizes their commendable points as well. He has confidence in their knowledge and capability. He began the letter in 1:8 with a similar commendation, saying that their faith was known all over the world. Paul is recognizing the necessity of their own spiritual growth but this is not limited to Rome but it is for all Christians. Contemporary churches need to be aware of the importance of this principle. We can be thankful for the commendable characteristics of our brothers in Christ even though they may not be spiritually mature. It is interesting that Paul knew so much about this church although he had never been to Rome.

In verse 16 he refers again to his apostleship to the Gentiles. He uses two unusual words to describe this function. First, he uses the word *leitourgon* (*leitourgon*) which he also used in 13:6. See that reference for a discussion of this word. We should note that the word generally refers to

one who is performing a public governmental service but it is sometime used in an accommodative way to refer to public religious service. (See Kittle, *op. cit.*, article by Strathmann, pp. 216-222.)

The other unusual word in this verse is *ιερουργουντα* (*hierourgunta*). It means to perform a religious service and therefore among the Greeks it came to be used of priests making sacrifices. Paul is not describing his own work for Christ as a “position of a priest” in contemporary terms but he is emphasizing that his work among the Gentiles is his personal, yet public sacrificial offering to God. Joseph Fitzmyer mentions that this is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament and it does not occur in the LXX except in IV Macc. 7:8. He also says that in this verse Paul describes his work among the Gentiles in liturgical language as the service of a priest of God. Paul does not use the common word for service but the priestly functional word. In this he is probably picturing the Levitical priests as they offered animals to the Lord as an act of worship. In this symbolism Paul pictures his life of evangelism among the Gentiles as a sacrificial offering to God. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 711.)

In verses 17-20 he rightfully expresses pride in his work among the Gentile, but he roots it properly in Christ Jesus rather than viewing it as his own great accomplishment. In this regard, he will speak of nothing except that which Christ has accomplished through him. His message was authenticated by the miracles and signs which came through the power of the Holy Spirit. From Jerusalem to Illyricum he had proclaimed the gospel of Christ, always wanting to preach to those who have not previously heard it. In this, he would not be building on the foundation laid by another.

Illyricum was a province of the Empire directly across the Adriatic Sea from Italy. The southwestern portion of Illyricum which bordered the Adriatic Sea, was known as Dalmatia. Nothing in Acts indicates that Paul had gone to Illyricum on his missionary tours but Acts does not claim to give us complete details of all of Paul’s travels, *e.g.* nothing is said about a visit to Colosse but it seems obvious from the Colossian letter that he had been there and also to Laodicea. In II Tim. 4:10 Paul says that Titus had gone to Dalmatia. This would be modern Albania and other parts of the Balkans.

He closes this section, verses 21-22, by quoting from Is. 52:15 saying that those who had not seen will see and those who had not heard will hear. This passage, Is. 52:13-15, serves as an introduction to the Suffering Servant passage of Is. 53. Paul applies it symbolically to his own mission to the Gentiles. In verse 22 he adds that those obligations had prevented him from visiting Rome.

Paul’s Plans for Future Travel: Rom. 15:23-33

The historical data in 15:23-29, when combined with the Acts accounts of Paul’s activities, gives important information to scholars as they try to reconstruct the setting in which Paul wrote this letter. In Paul’s mind there is an important relationship between Jerusalem, Rome, and Spain for this is the general route he anticipates taking.

Commentary

In verses 23-24 Paul tells his Roman brothers that there is no longer any room for him to work in the regions where he had been preaching, and he now plans to go to Spain, visiting Rome on his way. He either considered his work in the eastern portion of the Empire to be completed or he felt that he was no longer able to fulfill his ambitions among the Gentile people in those regions. Spain is his objective but he must visit Jerusalem first in order to deliver the contribution which he has collected from various churches, particularly those in Macedonia and Achaia. See II Cor. 8:1-9. The province of Macedonia was located in southern parts of the modern day Balkans and northern Greece. During Paul's time this was an important military, political, and economic region. The cities of Macedonia which are mentioned in Acts include Apollonia, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Thessalonica, and Berea. Achaia was southern Greece where Athens and Corinth were located. After his visit to Jerusalem he intended to go to Rome, enjoy the company of the Roman Christians for a while, and then move on to Spain.

Although Spain was in his travel plans, neither Acts nor his epistles indicate any visit to that country. Clement of Rome, who lived in the late first century, wrote to the church in Corinth in about A.D. 95, admonishing them on various topics including the healing of the continued division within the church there. He mentions Paul by name and refers to the apostle's instructions to the Corinthian church. Included in Clement's letter is a statement indicating that the apostle was released from his Roman imprisonment thus giving him the liberty to travel to Spain. However, Acts does not speak of such a release. Clement's statement about Paul is this: "After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects." (Clement of Rome, *The Epistle to the Corinthians*, chapter 5:7.) This statement by Clement claims that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment and that he made another mission journey which took him to "the extreme limit of the west" which is thought to have been referring to Spain. That trip is not mentioned in Acts and Clement's statement is the only reference in the patristic literature to such a journey. For these reasons his statement has been discounted by many New Testament scholars. It remains an open question.

In verses 25-27 Paul tells the Roman Christians that before visiting them he must go to Jerusalem carrying the collections for the poor saints in that region. He added that since the Jews had shared the spiritual message of the gospel with the Gentiles, the Gentiles owed a debt of gratitude to the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Sanday and Headlam consider Acts 6:1-4 as the beginning of the gradual development of officers and orders in the early church and believe that Paul's conduct in bringing the contributions from Greece was part of that development. However, this should be seen as a simple practical appointment of a group of people to take care of a need which arose in the church rather than the beginning of a super-organization to do this work. New Testament emphasis is always on personal ministry not on organizational work development. Below is the observation of Sanday and Headlam:

In Jerusalem the Sadducees, who were the wealthy aristocracy, were the determined opponents of Christianity, and there must have been in the city as very large class of poor who were dependent on the casual employment and spasmodic alms which are a characteristics of a great religious center. The existence of this class is clearly implied in the

narrative at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. There was from the very first a considerable body of poor dependent on the Church, and hence the organization of the Christian community with its lists (I Tim. 5:19) and common Church fund . . . and officers for distributing alms (Acts 6:1-4) must have sprung up very early.

(Sanday and Headlam, *op. cit.*, p. 412.)

In verses 28-29 he assures the Roman church that after he has completed his task in Jerusalem he will come to visit them. Paul uses the aorist participle of the word **σφραγίζω** (*sphragizō*) which is translated “have sealed,” “have put my seal on,” or “having completed this.” This is a legal term meaning “to authenticate” or “give a seal as the official mark of ownership.” Paul also uses this word to speak God’s seal of ownership of his children (II Cor. 1:22) and to declare the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). In Matt. 27:66 it is used concerning the sealing of Christ’s tomb. Among the Greeks it was used in reference to a tenant farmer who brought his produce to the owner. The sacks were marked with the seal of the farmer, authenticating that the contents were in fact his own. Paul used the word to refer to the authentic contributions – “the fruit” – from the churches of Achaia and Macedonia. When he completed this task, he planned to set sail for Spain. However, Acts 21-27 shows us that his plans did not work out that way. Instead, he was arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Rome as a prisoner.

In verses 30-33 he recognizes the perils which may await him in Jerusalem and asks for the prayers of the Roman Christians that he may be delivered from unbelievers in Judea and that his work in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there. He concludes by invoking the blessings of “the God of peace” upon the Roman Christians. This concludes the message and teaching of his letter. The remaining part is personal notes and salutations.

The Introduction of Phoebe: Rom. 16:1-2

Chapter 16 divides itself into five parts. The first section, 16:1-2, deals with Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. The second section, 16:3-16, sends personal salutations and greetings to some with whom Paul is apparently acquainted. The third section, 16:17-20 gives warnings concerning divisions in the church. The fourth, 16:21-24, contains greetings from some of Paul’s fellow workers. The fifth section, 16:25-27 is Paul’s concluding doxology.

Commentary

In verses 1-2 he introduces and commends Phoebe to his recipients, referring to her as a “servant of the church in Cenchrea.” This statement has given rise to some controversy concerning the service of women and whether or not Phoebe was a “deaconess” in the sense of an official church officer. Contemporary Christianity has much to say about position, officers, and hierarchical structure. Almost all such structure is foreign to the New Testament but it arose through centuries of gradual unauthorized innovation, finally resulting in the structure and doctrines of Catholicism. Protestantism has adopted some of these practices. We need to look at the specific words which Paul uses and try to understand their original meaning and implications.

We have no information about Phoebe or the church in Cenchrea except what is said here. Paul

uses the Greek word **συνιστημι** (*sunistēmi*) translated “to commend.” It was a technical word which was used in letters of recommendation or introduction, particularly referring to a friend. However, it was not frequently used in Greek literature. Paul used it in Rom. 16:1, in II Cor. 3:1, 4:2, 5:12, 10:18, and elsewhere. He refers to Phoebe as **την αδελφην ημων, ουσαν [και] διακονον της εκκλησιας εν Κεγχρεαις** (*tēn adelphēn ēmōn, ousan [kai] diakonon tēs en Kegcheais*). This is literally translated, “the sister of us, being [and or also] a servant (or minister) of the church in Cenchrea.” The question is, “Did Phoebe have an ‘official position’ as a deaconess in the church at Cenchrea?”

The Greek word **διακονον** (*diakonon*) is the accusative singular of **διακονος** (*diakonos*) which was a common Greek term. The word and its cognates occur just over one hundred times in the New Testament. It has a wide range of meanings and usages referring to “a servant, one who attends to the needs of another, a minister, a devoted follower, or a deacon.” The word came to be a technical term for a particular order of “church officers” but it is not used in that exact and restrictive sense in the New Testament. In Catholicism the appointment of the seven in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6) is considered the origin of the diaconship. Some non-catholic denominations have also taken that position. However, Acts does not refer to them in that way. The overwhelming use of the word in the New Testament is simply to refer to one who is a servant not one who is a member of a sacred order or an “officer” in the church. Jesus is referred to as a **διακονος** (*diakonos*), that is, as a servant, and he used the verb form of the word stating that he did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28. Mk. 10:45). He rejected the idea of rank among the apostles. In Matt. 23:8-12 he showed that titles (recognition of position and rank) were to be rejected. His followers were not to be called Rabbi, Father, or Teacher. That is, titles and positions were not to be used and his disciples were not to be designate one who was superior or over another. Instead, Jesus said, “only one is your Master and you are all brothers.”

By the end of the first century there were some who were seeking special recognition and John stated, “I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.” III Jn. 9. Kenneth S. Latourette, formerly of Yale University and one of the most respected church historians of the 20th century, gives us a picture of the simple church organization in the New Testament. Following that he says, “In the fore part of the second century the picture began to change. While no single form of structure as yet prevailed, we now hear indisputably of what soon came to be the accepted pattern, a bishop governing a particular church and of at least one bishop, that of the church in Antioch, acting as through it were his acknowledged right to address himself with authority to other churches.” (Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1953), p. 116.) The Bishop of Antioch of whom Latourette speaks is Ignatius. Other church historians, both ancient and modern, agree with Latourette’s assessment and description. Early in the second century the title “Bishop” designated a different “office” in the church organization. “Elder” and “pastor” became lower levels of authority. There were single bishops, not in the sense of “elders,” over churches in various places, some of them exercising authority over a wide geographic area comprising many congregations. Later this geographic jurisdiction became known as a diocese. Church servants (deacons) soon became an “order of deacons” rather than an individual work of service as described in the New Testament. Latourette continues his description of the development of this structure as he describes the election and authority of bishops as it had developed by the third century. “The bishop selected and ordained the subordinate clergy. Among

the latter the chief ranks were presbyters and deacons. Below them were the minor orders, such as sub-deacons, acolytes [those who performed ceremonial duties], exorcists, readers, and janitors. Deaconesses were found in the eastern part of the empire, with the responsibility of caring for member of their sex.” (Latourette, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.) By the time *The Apostolic Constitutions* began to be written (A.D. 375-390) deaconesses are frequently mentioned.

These developments are mentioned here to draw attention to the contrast between the simple first century arrangement and later complex developments. On the one hand we see the unadorned New Testament congregational structure designed for individual service, while on the other hand we see the beginning of a very complex hierarchical structure. This began to develop overtly in the late first century and early second century and continued through the centuries which followed, ultimately giving birth to the papacy. In Rom. 16:1-2 Paul is not speaking of “the office of deaconess” but of a Christian lady who was serving the church. There is nothing in the New Testament which would lead us to believe that she was a female preacher, a deaconess, or minister in the contemporary import of those terms. She was simply a godly sister in Christ who took seriously the admonition of Christ that all of his followers were to be servants, not lords. Paul says that Phoebe was a faithful servant and should be welcomed into their fellowship and provided with whatever needs she might have. Since Cenchrea was the seaport town just south of Corinth, and Paul wrote Romans from the city of Corinth, it is generally thought that Phoebe was probably the courier of the letter.

Personal Greetings: Rom. 16:3-16

Verses 3-16 are personal greetings. He lists about twenty-four people in this series of greetings and we will take them in order. Prisca and Aquila, husband and wife, Acts 18:1-3, are also mentioned in I Cor. 16:19 and II Tim. 4:19. However Prisca is given the longer name Priscilla. Earlier they had been forced to leave Rome when Claudius was ruling and they met Paul when he went to Corinth. They had risked their own lives for Paul, and he expresses his gratitude for that. A congregation was meeting in their home. Without doubt in the larger cities as the church grew there would have been many of these house-churches throughout the city. This was customary among the early Christians.

A dear friend of Paul, Epenetus, is next on the list. We know nothing about him except that he was the first convert to Christ in Asia. Next we have Mary, another unknown person who had worked hard for the Roman church. The next two are Andronicus and Junias who are referred to as “relatives” of Paul or his “fellow countrymen.” The Greek word **συγγενεις** (*suggeneis*) can be translated either way and we have no means of determining Paul’s use of it in this context. They had been in prison with him and were Christians prior to Paul’s conversion. We have none of the details of that imprisonment but Paul commends them as “outstanding among the apostles.” This phrase can mean that they were numbered among the apostles or that they were among others who were held in high esteem by the apostles. However, this should not be construed to mean the apostolic band of either the Twelve or part of the apostolic core as Paul was. The word **αποστολοις** (*apostolois*) means those who are sent on a mission. In this sense, Barnabas is called an apostle and so is Jesus himself.

Next is Ampliatus of whom we know nothing. Urbanus is spoken of as a fellow worker with

Paul but this is all we know about him. Stachys is mentioned in this connection but is also unknown otherwise. Paul refers to him as a dear friend. Apelles, another friend, has been tested and approved but we know none of those details. Paul sends greetings to those of the household of Aristobulus but he does not specifically mention greetings to Aristobulus. Some commentators believe that he might have been a pagan with slaves, servants, or family who had become Christians. It is also possible that Aristobulus had died but greetings were sent to his household. Some commentators believe that this may be referring to Aristobulus who was the son of Herod Agrippa I and grandson of Herod the Great. Josephus says that Aristobulus was a confident friend of Emperor Claudius and a long time resident of Rome. Fitzmyer says that if this Aristobulus had become a Christian in Judea and had a household which also converted to Christ, this could have been the way that the Roman church had its beginning. (Fitzmyer, *op. cit.*, p. 740.) However, there is no hard evidence of this.

Paul says that Herodion was his kinsman (see explanation above) but again, we know nothing about him. The household of Narcissus – those who belong to the Lord – is mentioned next but we know nothing of him. Tryphena and Tryphosa are two women who have worked hard for the Lord. Persis, also a dear woman is spoken of as a hard worker for the Lord. Rufus and his mother had been dear to Paul. In Mk. 15:21 a person named Rufus is referred to as the son of Simon of Cyrene who had been compelled to carry the cross for Christ. Some commentators speculate that this could be the true relationship because Mark is the only Gospel writer who identifies Simon of Cyrene as the father of Rufus. According to Papias (A.D. 135), the book of Mark was written in Rome under the direction of Peter. As tantalizing as this theory may be, identifying Rufus as the son of Simon of Cyrene, it is nothing more than speculation and has no historical basis. The expression, “his mother and mine” is translated by some as “his mother who has been a mother to me also.” Literally the phrase says, “and the mother of me also.” However, it is probable that Paul is speaking of the kindness and mothering care which she had provided to Paul. Verses 14-15 list nine unknown people as a group concluding with “all the saints with them.” This block is concluded with the expression, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” All the churches of Christ send greetings.” Paul may be speaking of many small house-churches scattered along the coast of the Mediterranean from Jerusalem west to Greece.

Warnings About Divisions: Rom. 16:17-20

Next, verses 17-19 are Paul’s warning against divisions and those who cause such divisions. He warns against those who place obstacles in the way of others and do not abide by the teaching they had received. Division has plagued the church from its beginning. Many of the churches described in the New Testament experienced some kind of dissention, false teaching, desire for prominence, interpersonal clashes, etc. Much of what Paul had said in chapters 14-15 was designed to calm those troubles but the apostle sees the necessity to express his fears of division in a much stronger way and advise the church of its own duties in confronting this. Paul says they should watch out for those who would sow this discord and the church should keep away from such opponents of truth. Some versions translate these admonitions as “mark them,” “keep an eye on them,” or “watch out for them.” The word **σκοπεῖν** (*skopein*) is used here and it means “to view attentively, to watch, to observe or to regard.” We immediately see that the word can have both a positive and negative meaning. It can mean to mark with admiration and the intent to copy one’s excellent traits, *i.e.* observe him attentively. It can also be negative, as Paul uses it

here. In that case it means to keep an eye on the possible malicious activity or divisive nature of one's activities. Churches are to always be on guard against such behavior. Elders are told that they must "encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it," Titus 1:9. In Gal. 5:20 discord is listed as one of the works of the flesh. The problem is that many who create discord claim to be doing it to correct an evil in the church, not realizing that they are parties to creating division which will destroy the congregation. All of this is an admonition to oppose false teaching. Unfortunately, this is very unpopular in contemporary culture where people consider it more important to please men than to please God.

Verse 18 tells us that the method of these people is (χρηστολογίας (*chrēstologias*). This is a compound word made up of *χρηστος* (*chrēstos*) meaning "useful, good, smooth, or profitable" and *λογος* (*logos*) which means a speech, a word, or a thing uttered." At first this word sounds as if it would be an excellent characteristic – literally, to speak useful or good words. However Paul's warning is that those who cause division come with this "smooth speech," and through their *εulogias* (*eulogias*), "flattery, fair speech," they deceive those who are *ακακων* (*akakōn*), innocent, blameless, free from evil." Paul says that these flattering speakers deceive such people. Some translations say that these people are "naïve," *i.e.*, they don't understand what is going on because they have been deceived. They have placed the wrong value on the fair, smooth, flattering speech of the divisive ones. This is the core of the danger.

Verse 19 leaves the problem of division and compliments the recipients of the letter concerning their reputation for obedience. This is a contrast and a counterbalance to the problems which he has just mentioned and Paul is joyful about it. He wants them to be *ακεραιους* (*akaeraious*) when it comes to evil. This word means "to be unmixed." Therefore it means "to be honestly sincere, pure in one's motive, not mixed with deceit." It is the word Jesus used in Matt. 10:16 when he told the apostles to be as wise as serpents but as innocent – harmless – as doves. Paul used it again in Phil. 2:14 where he admonishes the Philippians to be "blameless or harmless" children of God.

Verse 20 seems to be an observation of the result of this godly behavior, *i.e.* "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." In this verse Satan appears to stand for the embodiment of all evil.

Paul's Friends and Fellow Workers: Rom. 16:21-27

This section forms a sort of postscript to the letter. In verse 21 Timothy, Paul's fellow worker, sends greetings to the Romans. Timothy is well known as Paul's young companion who has worked with the apostle since he joined him and Silas in Lystra, Acts 16:1-3. His mother was a Jewess and a Christian but his father was a Greek. The Greeks admired the form of the physical body and in general they opposed circumcision, considering it a mutilation of the body. This probably played a part in Timothy's situation.

In verse 21 Paul lists Lucias, Jason, and Sosipater who also send greetings. He refers to them as his fellow countrymen (or relatives, kinsmen). Some commentators believe that Lucius is the man of Cyrene who is mentioned in Acts 13:1, and that Jason is the individual Paul speaks of as his host in Acts 17:5-9. Some believe that Sosipater is the long form of Sopater and they identify

him as the man in Berea mentioned in Acts 20:4. (C.H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 245.) Some commentators believe that Paul is saying that they are his kinsmen while others say it is more probable that this means “my fellow countrymen.” The identifications shown here do not have very strong evidence since all of these names were common among the Greeks.

In verses 22-23 Tertius is mentioned as Paul’s amanuensis or secretary who did the writing for Paul. It was customary for Paul to dictate some of his letters to another person who did the actual writing. Gaius is also mentioned in this verse and is referred to as Paul’s host in Corinth. This, undoubtedly is the Gaius mentioned in I Cor. 1:14 who was baptized by Paul.

Erastus was a city official in Corinth, the director of public works. His is a more interesting situation than the others. He is referred to as the city’s director of public works, city manager, city treasurer, or the city’s chamberlain. The Greek word **οικονομος** (*oikonomos*) can be translated in a wide variety of ways, “manager of a house, a steward, a public treasurer.” (Arndt and Gingrich, *op. cit.*, p. 562.) Jesus used the word in Lk. 16:1 in the Parable of the Dishonest Steward. An interesting archeological discovery in Corinth may shed some light on Erastus. An inscription was uncovered which said, “Erastus laid the pavement at his own expense in return for his *aedileship*.” Keck says that the Latin word *aedile* refers to a person who is elected for a one year term following a campaign for office which had been marked by promises of benefits to the city. Perhaps the laying of the pavement had been a campaign promise. Keck adds, “Perhaps Paul’s Erastus was the man memorialized in a mid-first century inscription found at Corinth.” (Keck, *op. cit.*, p. 380.) To lay a pavement of that size – said to have been nineteen square meters – would have been very expensive for an individual, so it is assumed that the Erastus of the inscription was probably a wealthy man. We do not have enough hard evidence to positively identify Erastus as the man mentioned in the inscription. The last person to be mentioned in verse 23 is Quartus, of whom we know nothing.

The Doxology: Rom. 16:25-27

There is a manuscript textual problem with verse 24 because it is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts. The English KJV and the ASV retain it. The manuscript evidence for this verse is quite insufficient and it is omitted by almost all textual scholars.

Some scholars also believe that verses 25-27 are not Pauline and were probably added by a later hand. However, this is basically a stylistic argument. Those advocating this cite the change in vocabulary, style, syntax, and the fact that Paul did not end his other letters with a lengthy doxology. All of these objections are open to question. The doxology is found in all of our oldest and best manuscripts. These include **ℵ** (the Sinaiticus), **B** (the Vaticanus), **C** (the Ephraemi Rescriptus), **D^p** (the Claromontanus) and most of the ancient versions.

This doxology is similar to that found in Eph. 3:20-21. Both begin the same way, “Now to him who is able.” In Ephesians he uses the expression, “to do immeasurably more than we ask of imagine according to his power that is at work within us.” In Romans he says, “to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ.” The similarities show that these two doxologies are probably from the same hand. However, many critics reject the Pauline authorship of

Ephesians and therefore they believe that the similarity is a faulty argument. However the acceptance of the authenticity of Ephesians voids this objection. We must also remember that in the bulk of Romans Paul is dealing with controversy and it is therefore a polemic – an argument. A doxology is a statement of praise and glorification rather than argument. One should not expect the same vocabulary or style in a doxology as would be found in polemical writings from the same author.

Verse 25 begins with Paul's exaltation, "to him who is able to strengthen you." Here he emphasizes God's activity in the lives of his people. He sees the gospel as his own possession – "my gospel." He is not thinking of the origin of the gospel but of its content in his preaching and teaching. He equates the "gospel" and the "mystery" in much the same way as he does in various places in Ephesians. The "mystery" is revealed in Christ's sacrifice, yet we will never have the capacity to comprehend the love of God in providing for our redemption. Paul is not affirming a "mysterious gospel" but a gospel which is rooted in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We experience God's love which is completely overwhelming. God's design was that the prophets would attest to its reality and it would be for the redemption of all nations. Paul extols God for his love, wisdom, and power.

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